

# **Conversions**

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

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When describing their conversions, some people emphasize that there was a radical break from what went before in their lives whereas others say that there was no break at all. Both are valid explanations of the experience. That is because some conversions are abrupt, such as for someone who gave their life to Jesus while in prison after committing a horrible crime, whereas others are gradual, such as for those who were baptized as infants and grew up in the Church. Whether our conversions were abrupt or gradual, the important thing is to appreciate both dynamics. There is always a blend of both disruption and continuity in every conversion process.

In our Gospel today, Jesus both asks Simon, Andrew, James, and John to leave their nets as fishermen and also says that they will now be 'fishers of men.' In other words, we see a blend. On the one hand, there is a sharp break when Jesus says, 'leave your nets behind.' They had to make a life changing decision and give up their source of income and even their father. This would not have been an easy decision. On the other hand, there is continuity when Jesus says, 'I will make you fishers of men.' All the skills they had already gained in fishing would be very useful in following Jesus.

Just as fishing required their patience, hard work, odd hours, and the failure, so too would their lives as disciples of Jesus.

In his meeting with Catholic Digital Missionaries and Influencers on July 29, 2025, Pope Leo did something similar to Jesus by playing off of this very same Gospel passage of Matthew 4 for his target audience, those involved in Catholic social media. He said the following. Jesus,

asks us to weave other nets: networks of relationships, of love, of gratuitous sharing where friendship is profound and authentic; networks where we can mend what has been broken, heal from loneliness, not focus on the number of followers, but experience the greatness of infinite Love in every encounter; networks that give space to others more than to ourselves, where no 'bubble' can silence the voices of the weakest; networks that liberate and save; networks that help us rediscover the beauty of looking into each other's eyes; networks of truth. In this way, every story of shared goodness will be a knot in a single, immense network: the network of networks, the network of God.

This is a great example of taking something from the common vocabulary of people in social media, 'networks,' and incorporating it into discipleship. Again, it shows how discipleship involves both disruption from what we are used to and continuity with our past into where God is calling us.

*Following Jesus involves a decisive step forward and also the ability to bring the continuity of our past into the present.*

How have both abruptness and gradualness shaped my ongoing conversion process? Which dynamic is missing and could help rejuvenate my faith as a disciple of Jesus today?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray for conversions which are not so gradual that we don't notice the change in us nor so abrupt that we forget to honor our journey up to the present moment. May we respect the dynamics of the conversion process that is unique to each one of us. May Jesus, the one who called 'fishermen' to become 'fishers of men' and Pope Leo, the one who called Catholic Digital Missionaries and Influencers from 'nets' to 'networks,' be sure guides for us on the journey of ongoing conversion.