

Conversion

Conversation between a man recently converted to Christ and an unbelieving friend:

"So you were converted to Christ?"

"Yes."

"Then you must know a lot about him. Tell me, in what country was he born?"

"I don't know."

"How old was he when he died?"

"I don't know."

"How many books did he write?"

"I don't know."

"You definitely know very little for a man who claims to have converted to Christ!"

"You are right. I am ashamed of how little I know about him. But what I do know is this: three years ago, I was a drunkard. I was deep in debt. My family was falling apart. My wife and children dreaded my return home every night. But now I have stopped drinking; we no longer have debts; ours is now a happy home; my children look forward to my coming home in the evening. All this Christ has done for me. And this is what I know about Christ!"

What matters most is precisely how Jesus changes our lives. We must emphasise this strongly: following Jesus means changing the way we see God, others, the world, and ourselves. Compared to that sponsored by current opinion, it is another way of living and another way of dying. This is the mystery of "conversion".

Family Conversation

Son: "Have you heard what happened in Ukraine?"

Father: "Bah!"

Mother: "Is the soup salty enough?"

Son: "That's a problem, isn't it?"

Father: "Yes."

Son: "Then what do you think?"

Father: "You are right, it lacks a little salt."

Mother: "Here, have some."

Son: "It's strange how it could have come to this."

Mother: "How much did you get for mathematics?"

Father: "I never understood anything about maths."

Mother: "It's cold tonight..."

A husband listens to his wife at most for 17 seconds and then he starts talking.

A wife listens to her husband for a maximum of 17 seconds and then she starts talking.

Husband and wife listen to their children for...

The tree

A man had four children. He wanted his children to learn not to judge things quickly. Therefore, he invited each of them to take a trip to look at a tree that was planted in a distant place. He sent them out one at a time, three months apart. The children obeyed.

When the last one returned, he gathered them together and asked them to describe what they had seen.

The first son said that the tree was ugly, twisted and bent.

The second son said, however, that the tree was covered with

green buds and promise of life.

The third son disagreed; he said it was covered with flowers which smelled so sweet and were so beautiful that he said they were the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

The last son disagreed with all the others; he said that the tree was full of fruit, life and bounty.

The man then explained to his sons that all the answers were correct as each had only seen one season of the tree's life.

He said that one cannot judge a tree, or a person, by a single season, and that their essence, the pleasure, joy and love that come from those lives can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are complete.

When spring is over all the flowers die, but when it returns they smile happily. In my eyes everything passes, on my head everything goes white.

But never believe that in spring's dying moments all flowers die because, just last night, a peach branch was blooming.

(anonymous from Vietnam)

Do not let the pain of one season destroy the joy of what will come later.

Do not judge your life by a difficult season. Persevere through the difficulties, and surely better times will come when you least expect it! Live each of your seasons with joy and the power of hope.

The wise man

Emperor Cyrus the Great loved to converse amiably with a very wise friend named Akkad.

One day, having just returned exhausted from a war campaign against the Medes, Cyrus stopped by his old friend to spend a

few days with him.

"I am exhausted, dear Akkad. All these battles are wearing me out. How I wish I could stop and spend time with you, chatting on the banks of the Euphrates...."

"But, dear sire, by now you have defeated the Medes, what will you do?"

"I want to seize Babylon and subdue it."

"And after Babylon?"

"I will subdue Greece."

"And after Greece?"

"I will conquer Rome."

"And after that?"

"I will stop. I will return here and we will spend happy days conversing amiably on the banks of the Euphrates...."

"And why, sire, my friend, shall we not begin at once?"

There will always be another day to say "I love you".

Remember your loved ones today, and whisper in their ear, tell them how much you love them. Take the time to say "I am sorry", "Please listen to me", "Thank you".

Tomorrow you will not regret what you did today.

The cricket and the Coin

A wise man from India had a close friend who lived in Milan. They had met in India, where the Italian had gone with his family on a tourist trip. The Indian had acted as a guide for the Italian, taking them to explore the most characteristic corners of his homeland.

Grateful, the Milanese friend had invited the Indian to his home. He wanted to return the favour and introduce him to his city. The Indian was very reluctant to leave, but then gave in to his Italian friend's insistence and one fine day he

disembarked from a plane at Malpensa.

The next day, the Milanese and the Indian were walking through the city centre. The Indian, with his chocolate-coloured face, black beard and yellow turban attracted the gaze of passers-by, and the Milanese man walked around proud to have such an exotic friend.

Suddenly, in Piazza San Babila, the Indian stopped and asked, "Do you hear what I hear?" The Milanese, a little bewildered, strained his ears as much as he could, but admitted that he heard nothing but the great noise of the city traffic.

"There is a cricket singing nearby," the Indian continued, confidently.

"You are wrong," replied the Milanese. "I only hear the noise of the city. Besides, there can't be crickets around here."

"I am not mistaken. I hear the song of a cricket," retorted the Indian and resolutely started searching among the leaves of some shrunken saplings. After a while he pointed out to his friend, who was watching him sceptically, a small insect, a splendid singing cricket, which was cowering and grumbling at those disturbing his concert.

"Did you see that there was a cricket there?" said the Indian.

"It's true," admitted the Milanese. "You Indians have much sharper hearing than us Whites..."

"This time it is you who are wrong," smiled the wise Indian.

"Be careful..." The Indian pulled a coin out of his pocket and pretending not to notice, dropped it on the pavement.

Immediately four or five people turned to look.

"Did you see that?" the Indian explained. "This coin's jungle was more thinner and fainter than the cricket's trill. Yet have you noticed how many Whites heard it?"

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The exegetes

A famous biblical scholar had invited a group of colleagues to his home. They sat around a table that had a magnificent vase of flowers in the middle and began to argue over a page of the Bible. They argued animatedly, breaking down every word, hypothesising ancient roots, conjecturing, postulating, comparing, distilling, historicising, demythologising, psychologising, feminising...

They could agree on almost nothing.

Suddenly the host interrupted the discussion and turned to one of the guests who was taking flowers from the vase in the middle of the table and systematically destroying them.

"What are you doing?"

"I am counting the whorls, dividing the stamens and pistils, setting aside stalks and filaments..."

"This scientific zeal does you credit, but you are ruining all the beauty of these beautiful flowers!"

The man smiled bitterly: "That is exactly what you are doing."

Rabbi Elimelekh had delivered a wonderful sermon on the art of living. Full of enthusiasm, the listeners joyfully accompanied him as he took the carriage back to his village.

At one point, the rabbi brought the carriage to a halt and asked the driver to go ahead without him as he mingled with the people.

"What an example of humility!" said one of his disciples.

"Humility has nothing to do with it," replied Elimelekh. "Here people walk happily, sing, drink wine, chat, make new friends, and all thanks to an old rabbi who came to speak on the art of living. So I prefer to leave my theories in the carriage and enjoy the party."

The name

In the Faculty of Medicine at a major university, the professor of anatomy distributed a questionnaire to all students as a final exam.

One student who had prepared meticulously answered all the questions promptly until he came to the last one.

The question was: "What is the first name of the cleaning lady?"

The student handed in the test, leaving the last answer blank. Before handing in the paper, he asked the professor if the last question on the test would count towards the grade.

"It is clear!" replied the professor. "In your career you will meet many people. They all have their own degree of importance. They deserve your attention, even with a small smile or a simple hello."

The student never forgot the lesson and learned that the cleaning lady's first name was Marianne.

A disciple asked Confucius, "If the king asked you to rule the country, what would be your first action?"

"I would like to learn the names of all my collaborators."

"What nonsense! It is certainly not a matter of primary concern for a prime minister."

"A man cannot hope to receive help from what he does not know," replied Confucius. "If he does not know nature, he will not know God. Similarly, if he does not know who he has by his side, he will have no friends. Without friends, he will not be able to devise a plan. Without a plan, he will not be able to direct anyone's actions. Without direction, the country will plunge into darkness and even the dancers will no longer know how to put one foot next to the other. Thus a seemingly trivial action, learning the name of the person next to you, can make a huge difference."

The incorrigible sin of our time is that everyone wants to put things right immediately and forgets that they need others to

do this."

The perfume

One cold March morning, in a hospital, due to serious complications, a baby girl was born much earlier than expected, after only six months of pregnancy.

She was a tiny little creature and the new parents were painfully shocked by the doctor's words: "I don't think the baby has much chance of survival. There is only a 10 per cent chance that she will survive the night, and even if that happens by some miracle, the probability that she will have future complications is very high." Paralysed with fear, the mother and father listened to the doctor's words as he described to them all the problems the child would face. She would never be able to walk, talk, see. She would be mentally retarded and much more.

Mum, dad and their five-year-old boy had waited so long for that child. Within a few hours, they saw all their dreams and wishes broken forever.

But their troubles were not over, the little one's nervous system was not yet developed. So, any caress, kiss or hug was dangerous, the disconsolate family members could not even convey their love to her, they had to avoid touching her.

All three held of them held hands and prayed, forming a small beating heart in the huge hospital:

"Almighty God, Lord of life, do what we cannot do: take care of little Diana, hold her to your breast, cradle her and make her feel all our love."

Diana was like a vibrant little baby doll and slowly began to improve. Weeks passed and the little one continued to gain weight and become stronger. Finally, when Diana turned two months old, her parents were able to hold her for the first

time.

Five years later, Diana had become a serene child who looked towards the future with confidence and a zest for life. There were no signs of physical or mental deficiency, she was a normal child lively and full of curiosity.

But that is not the end of the story.

One warm afternoon, in a park not far from home, while her brother was playing football with friends, Diana was sitting in her mother's arms. As always she was chatting happily when suddenly she fell silent. She tightened her arms as if hugging someone and asked her mum: "Do you smell that?"

Smelling rain in the air, Mum replied: "Yes. It smells like when it's going to rain."

After a while, Diana raised her head and stroking her arms exclaimed: "No, it smells like Him. It smells like when God hugs you tightly."

The mother began to cry hot tears, as the little girl scampered towards her little friends to play with them.

Her daughter's words had confirmed what the woman had known in her heart for a long time. Throughout her time in hospital, as she struggled for life, God had taken care of the little girl, embracing her so often that his perfume had remained imprinted in Diana's memory.

God's perfume remains in every child. Why are we all in such a hurry to erase it?

I killed her for a piece of bread

A man who had not entered a church for twenty years hesitantly approached a confessional. He knelt down and, after a moment's

hesitation, said through tears: "I have blood on my hands. It was during the retreat to Russia. Every day some of my people died. The hunger was terrible. We were told never to enter the isbas without a rifle in our hands, ready to shoot at the first sign of... Where I had entered, there was an old man and a blond girl with sad eyes: "Bread! Give me some bread!" The girl bent down. I thought she was reaching for a weapon, a bomb. I fired decisively. She fell to the ground.

When I got closer, I saw that the girl was clutching a piece of bread in her hand. I had killed a 14-year-old girl, an innocent girl who wanted to offer me bread. I started drinking to forget: Imagine!

Can God forgive me?"

Whoever goes around with a loaded rifle will end up shooting. If the only tool you have is a hammer, you end up seeing everything else as nails. And you spend the day hammering away.

Remember the sermon

One Sunday, around noon, a young woman was washing salad in the kitchen, when she was approached by her husband who asked her teasingly:

"Could you tell me what the pastor said in this morning's sermon?"

"I don't remember any more," the woman confessed.

"Why then do you go to church to hear sermons if you don't remember them?"

"You see, dear: the water washes my salad and yet it does not remain in the colander; yet my salad is completely washed.

It is not important to take notes. It is important to let

oneself be “washed” by the Word of God.