

# A Mission Church

*At different times during the past three years of GOD FIRST, we've touched on the need for the gift of "Humility" to be part and parcel to our developing a spiritual prayer relationship with our Lord and God. Last week we went more deeply into understanding this gift and how it must be absorbed into our lives, not always easy. But if we are to live the commissioning of Jesus Christ, passed down to us through Baptism as members of A MISSION CHURCH, this gift is essential. If we're going to take our Catholic faith seriously, then humility is a key ingredient.*

*And with it, a need for true confession and conversion, gifts that allow us the wisdom to see God's hand directing our lives. So we take off today looking at what is meant by confession and conversion.*

## CONFESSION

We relate this word immediately to what we know as the sacrament. And that's fine. But here, we're not going to touch on the sacrament. That will occur later in this series since there are so many issues involved, including confessing sins to a priest.

But before the sense of sacrament can be thought of, the individual needs, in a sense, a personal confession that acknowledges that God has become infused into the person's life, and that the person's life has not matched up with Christ's humility, taken on for the sake of our lives.

## READING THE MIND

As the story goes, the woman came to the priest to confess her sins. She did so, but the priest refused to forgive her of her sins. Now that sounds criminal to

us, until we realize that the priest had the ability to know the heart and mind of an individual. The vast majority of us cannot do that. It's not in our natural order. The woman left without having received the forgiveness sought, but with a warning from the priest. Not long afterwards she returned to the priest with the intent of seeking forgiveness for her lifestyle. She had changed in accord with the previous instruction of the priest, and now her heart was

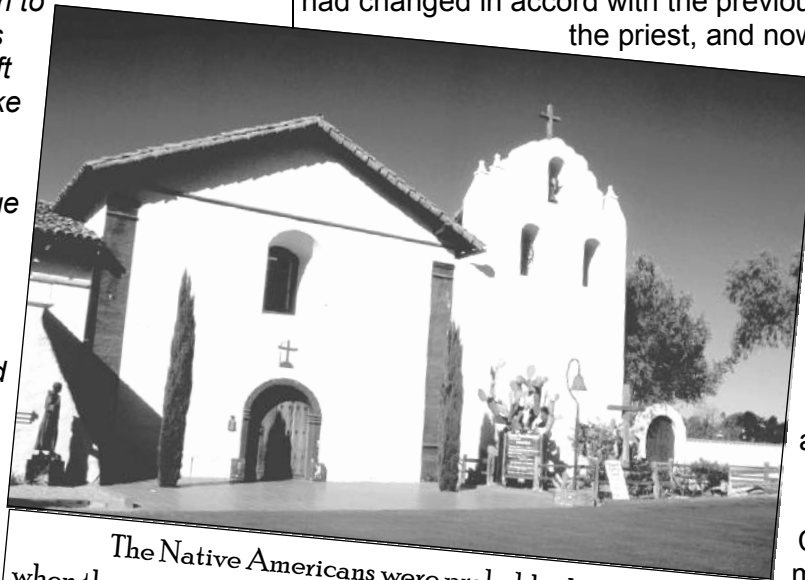
one with God. The priest was St. John Vianney in Ars, France, in the 1800's. The woman then celebrated the sacrament and received absolution.

When we make a true Confession, it means that we have come to admit that our way is not the way of the Lord; that our lives do not reflect the life which resides within — and that God is absent.

## ADMITTANCE

Confession is going to lead us to be like the woman who confronted St. John Vianney. It is an admittance of the awesomeness of God in comparison to the relatively insignificant nature of our beings.

Confession says I know there's more than what I have



The Native Americans were probably dumbfounded when the missionaries such as Junipero Serra began teaching them the faith — a faith that said Jesus had to be humble, so to fulfill the will of the Father, and then to die on a cross.

For them, to abandon their beliefs that gods were found in nature, would require a major conversion since this is where they interacted with their gods. A confession to a faith in and through Christ would eliminate any past understanding of a relationship with god. It would be a total abandonment of self.

The confession obviously took place in the lives and minds of thousands of Native Americans.

If we could possibly guess as to why a conversion occurred, it had to have been because of the resurrection. Their own faith did not have an afterlife in union with God.

We're told churches could not be built big enough for the number of Native Americans who experienced the confession and conversion we may take for granted.

To say, "Jesus has saved me," is easy. To make it the core element of your being, where you are joined in that saving act of Christ, requires conviction that leads to salvation.

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conjured up as a life, and that it can only come from the power of God. Anything else is of little consequence. The Native Americans learned that in much the same way that the members of the early Church did when the disciples proclaimed a new message of salvation.



**CONFESSION (in simple terms):**

- Is life changing, the first stage of conversion;
- Is an acknowledgment that we've trusted in our limited abilities that cannot compare to God's;
- Recognition that God's way is going to provide for eternal salvation rather than the temporary nature of the temporal order in which we live;
- Is open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- Is meant to help us recognize sin that invades our lives, and the forgiveness offered by God.

**CONVERSION (in simple terms):**

- Helps us focus on everlasting life, the promise of Jesus to true believers, those who turn hearts and minds to God;
- Affects how we live this life so that this life helps us see eternal life;
- Is the acceptance of **humility** on a daily basis;
- Requires daily prayer throughout the day;
- Always gives praise, glory, thanksgiving, adoration and blessing to God before we ever utter a petition for ourselves or others;
- It reminds us that life does not happen without God.

Confession as we know it, a sacrament where sin is confessed and sacramental grace is shared, follows this personal confession, admittance. In the Mass, we're confronted with this personal confession. But it does not replace the sacramental form.

**CONVERSION**

Remember the gospel accounts of St. Peter. He said he was ready to follow Jesus even to death, and claimed him as the Messiah. They were words of an immature follower of Jesus. We know, because Peter denied Jesus three times to save his own hide following Jesus' arrest.

It wasn't until after the resurrection that Peter grew in Christian maturity and was open to the full meaning of what Jesus taught. Then he "believed."

Then conversion took place. That's why Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him.

Conversion of heart and mind are always being challenged in life, and by our Lord who wishes us to continuously accept his grace. This grace, his life, will always be the challenge for us. When we think we can't grow further in our relationship with God, conversion in our hearts and lives stops. And that's when Jesus is going to ask each of us, "Do you love me?"

The fullness of our lives must be consumed in our acceptance of and desire for daily conversion. That's where we confront sin, but more importantly, where we confront God day-in and day-out.

The apostle Thomas was confronted by the resurrected Lord and the following teaching is given to all the apostles as it is to us today. Belief in the resurrection is proven only in the heart and mind. And conversion only comes to what is realized above the human plain in which we live.

At Mass, the call to conversion is constant. Whether it be in the penitential rite, or the Liturgy of the Word, or the Liturgy of the Eucharist, God is asking us, "Do you love me?" And he is instructing us, "Put your hand into my life."

**SEE THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**



There are few references to the word conversion or its derivatives. Other terms such as "became," or "changed" are often used. The Gospel of John very often uses the phrase "came to believe."

**CONVERSION** — CONVERT  
Acts 15:3      telling of the c of the Gentiles

**CONVERT** — CONVERSION, CONVERTED  
Mt. 23:15      traverse sea and land to make one c  
1 Tim. 3:6      He should not be a recent c

**CONVERTS** — CONVERT  
Tb 1:8          and to c who were living  
Acts 13:38      worshipers who were c to Judaism

**CONFESS** — CONFESSED, CONFESSES, CONFESSING, CONFESSION  
Ps. 32:5      I said, "I c my faults to the Lord.  
Rom. 10:9      if you c with your mouth that Jesus  
Phil. 2:11      and every tongue c that Jesus Christ  
Heb. 13:15      is the fruit of lips that c his name  
Jas. 5:16      c your sins to one another and pray

**CONFESSES** — CONFESS  
Rom. 10:10      and one c with the mouth, and so is  
1 Jn. 2:3          whoever c the Son has the Father as

**CONFESSION** — CONFESS  
2 Cor. 9:13      for your obedient c of faith  
1 Tm. 6:12      when you made your noble c  
1 Tm. 6:13      under Pontius Pilate for the noble c  
Heb. 3:1          the apostle and high priest of our c  
Heb. 4:14          Son of God, let us hold fast to our c  
Heb. 10:23      to our c that gives us hope, for he

*Confession will be dealt with more intensely when we discuss the sacrament. Be mindful, as it is shown in scripture, the inner confession, or contrition is the first step to conversion and needs to be seen by others in public life.*