



Next Wednesday offers us two seasonal icons for reflection: Chocolate and Ashes. Both represent passion; both require sacrifice; and both enhance, and may even transform a relationship. For now, let's leave the physical world and enter the spiritual realm. In that reality, two words come to mind: *Metanoia* and *Conversion*

Wikipedia defines *Metanoia* as "a transformative change of heart; especially: a spiritual conversion." The term suggests repudiation, a change of mind, and perhaps even repentance and atonement. However, "Conversion" may best describe its true nature and connotation.

The Catholic Encyclopedia adds that *Conversion* "refers to a moral change, a turning or returning to God and to the true religion." Rather than review the *Encyclopedia's* five page explanation of the history, transitions and transformations involved in becoming Catholic (with an uppercase "C"), let's look at the conversion experiences of two familiar Saints—Peter and Paul.

Both experienced profound conversions that radically altered their lives, and ended with their martyrdoms. St. Peter's conversion was slow, subject to hesitations, impulsive errors and repentances throughout his life. St. Paul's conversion was sudden, swift and sincere...the kind that makes for great screenplays. Nonetheless, his letters revealed a continuing inner struggle and spiritual growth throughout his entire life.

So, what's that got to do with ashes and Lent? Everything!

I'm a product of a Catholic education, and one of our annual grammar school arts & crafts projects was the Lenten Calendar. It consisted of 40 windows we would open by peeling back a tab we had cut into one sheet of paper. On the sheet beneath, we wrote a daily sacrifice or spiritual

action to perform. Not a bad way to introduce children to the practice of daily prayer and sacrifice.

To bring us some closure, I'd like to suggest a few spiritual practices that each of us could easily adopt for this Lent. Please don't just rebrand one to those New Year resolutions that you abandoned before the NFL Playoffs started. Try one or more of these as your Lenten resolutions.

- \* Subscribe to any Daily Reflection. Two come to mind. The *Word Among Us* is popular. And Bishop Robert Barron has a special Lenten series ready to email to your InBox. Of course, you can easily find many others on Google.

- \* Pick up and read that book you've been thinking about for the past few months. Or maybe a must-read your friend recommended. I'm sure Deacon Peter would make one of his books available. (By the way, they're not free.)

- \* Download the *Laudete* app to your Android, iPad or iPhone. In addition to its daily scripture readings, it offers audio reflections, a complete Bible, and many other links.

- \* Visit the Prayer Chapel. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Thursday. Bring your Rosary. You'd be surprised what an hour of prayer and meditation can do for your body, mind and spirit.

- \* And speaking of the Rosary. How about praying a family rosary? How about one with your spouse just before retiring? How about just a decade a day?

- \* Go to one more Mass each week than you do now.

- \* Attend the Parish Lenten Mission from Feb 26-28.

- \* And in closing, Brothers, let us not forget our Lenten practice of "Abstinence." As Catholic Knights we should set an example for the rest of the Parish by observing a Friday Fast, abstinence from meat, and dining on fish every Friday this Lent.

Can I get an "Amen?"