Conversion is of course intended to be only the first stage of a lifelong walk with God. A major fault in fundamentalist groups is to assume that after a quick ritual of “accepting Christ as personal Savior” the major work of conversion is done. In the USA, for example, some 40% of the population claims to be born again but this far exceeds the number of committed Christians All areas of our lives need to be turned over to Christ for deeper healing and renewal. On a daily basis all of us need to repent of our sins and redirect our lives and actions to God. Every day we must experience God’s work saving and renewing us. Every day we need to be filled anew with the Holy Spirit. Besides daily spiritual renewal we need to make time for God to touch us more deeply by taking a few days off periodically to pray and reconsider what is happening in our lives. We need to read Scripture and spiritual books, make friends with spiritual people and frequent the sacraments as encounters with Christ in a devout and sincere fashion.

Converts to non-Christian religions
Another issue we have to deal with is people who leave Christianity altogether and claim to meet God in a non-Christian religion. Here for example we find people who have become disillusioned with an apparent lack of clear moral principles and practice and join Islam, or people who seeking mystical encounter with God and join an eastern religion. Again we have to rejoice that people have found God who were very weak Christians before: better a committed believer in another faith than an uncommitted Christian. However, in many cases these people have joined another faith because they have not understood or appreciated Christianity, and it is the role of apologists to dialogue powerfully with these on the mission of Christ and his work. These people have not rejected Christ but a weak and uninspiring masquerade of what he is.

Reaching those who need conversion
As committed Catholics we need to reach many classes of people both within the Church and outside it. We need to reach out to the morally depraved but also to the indifferent and worldly. We need to touch those in the spiritual darkness of non-Christian religions, as well as to the many agnostics and atheists in the world today. Finally we need to make contact with those outside the Catholic Church who have a faulty knowledge and appreciation of what Christ has left us, especially in the sacraments the Blessed Virgin Mary and other aspects of Catholic Christianity which our critics consider “unbiblical”.

The fullness of faith is in the Catholic Church
We should not conclude this pamphlet without stating very clearly that it is in the Catholic Church that the fullness of Christ’s redemption and God’s love will be found. To be converted and to find Christ in all his fullness means becoming a Catholic. Whatever other Christians possess they have in some way derived from the Catholic Church: which was originally the only Christian church. Many have converted to Catholicism from other churches and especially today are those who are rejoicing that the fullness of Christian truth is to be found in Catholic Christianity. Our task is to appreciate fully comprehend and spread abroad what we have as Catholics and share it with other Christians (Mt 10:32, 28:18-20).

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lifestyle that he lays down. However, in the early Church the point of conversion was marked by baptism (on Christ’s own command: Acts 2:28, John 3:5). As time went by, the Church became filled with millions of people who went through the ritual of baptism without ever undergoing any personal conversion. It is not that the Church encouraged this state of affairs: throughout the ages the Church has ceaselessly campaigned for renewal and conversion, perhaps never more so than today.

**Finding God and leaving the Church**

Today fundamentalist groups are preaching conversion. They insist that people undergoing conversions use formulas of commitment that Catholics are not familiar with and they claim explicitly or imply that those who do not use their formulas of commitment are not Christians at all. For example, they insist that one must “accept Jesus as personal Savior”, an expression not found in the Bible. And because the Catholic church does not use their terminology Catholics are not seen as Christians and the Catholic church is not regarded as Christian. False preaching and evangelizing of this nature has caused untold damage to the Church, causing many to leave the Catholic Church or create in them serious doubts.

The need to look after converts

However, this is not the only difficulty we have to face in the subject of conversion. Many who find God do not seem to have a very deep or lasting conversion. This is particularly true in the case of people who have committed their lives to Christ, perhaps after a attending an evangelistic crusade. People seem to change for a while and then lapse into their old ways and are now much more difficult to reach. Here we may say that Christ warned about this in the parable of the Sower. People can be caught up in a very worldly way of life. Others may not get support from friends. Others may just not be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to change their lifestyle.

**Problems in conversion for the Catholic**

From a pastoral point of view “conversion” however can be difficult for the Church, particularly if people have already become known as staunch Catholics. They now claim to “know Jesus” or “have accepted him as Savior”. What were they before? And why do some of these undergoing a conversion move out of the Catholic Church? We have to admit that a lot of what we sometimes regard as piety is not really evidence of a very deep relationship with God. A real appreciation of Christ as Savior and Lord seems often lacking amongst Catholics and a real living relationship with him in all the activities of life. Rather than having a deep faith in Christ Catholics may have their devotion centered in Mary or the saints or in receiving the sacraments regularly without being evangelized. In other words, Catholics may focus upon secondary aspects of the redemption instead of the primary ones, or fail to understand that these secondary aspects have no meaning apart from their value of imparting the redemptive work of Christ to us. We have been sacramentalized rather than evangelized.

**Religious experiences and conversion**

Another area of difficulty is religious experience associated with conversion. While profound religious experiences often accompany conversion, this is not necessarily always the case. Overwhelming joy in finding Christ or great sorrow for sin is not something to be ashamed of, and those in pastoral ministry should not be surprised or alarmed when people get emotional.

**Spiritual growth after conversion**

While profound experiences often accompany conversion, this is not necessarily always the case. Overwhelming joy in finding Christ or great sorrow for sin is not something to be ashamed of, and those in pastoral ministry should not be surprised or alarmed when people get emotional. Neither should they be suspicious when people talk of visions of Christ or supernatural voices. It is upon experiences of God that the Church is built and these have occurred in every society and throughout the history of the Church. Great saints have often had great conversion experiences and their teaching and example has led countless thousands to God in wonderful encounters with the love and forgiveness God gives us in Christ. Conversion may be neither sudden nor very dramatic and neither may one have visions or speak in tongues. It is very wrong to put pressure on people to display these signs because it opens the door to fraud, and it makes conversion a matter of emotion rather than commitment to Christ.