



Each year, at the beginning of Lent, the priest imposes ashes on the faithful's forehead with a phrase that powerfully resonates in the heart: **"Convert and believe in the Gospel."** These words, taken from the Gospel of Mark (Mk 1:15), are not just a pious invitation but an urgent call to inner transformation, to an authentic faith, and to a life of fullness.

Conversion and faith in the Gospel are not abstract concepts or empty rituals but concrete paths that lead to an encounter with Christ, the only one who can give meaning to our existence. In this article, we will deeply explore the meaning of these words, their theological significance, and their practical application in our daily lives.

1. What Does It Mean to Convert?

Conversion is not just a change of attitude or the decision to become a "better person." In the biblical context, conversion is a **radical change of mind and heart**, a complete turning toward God. The Greek word used in the New Testament for "conversion" is *metanoia*, which means a profound change in mentality and life.

This process involves:

- **Recognizing our own fragility:** We are dust, and to dust, we shall return (cf. Gen 3:19). The ashes imposed on our foreheads remind us that our earthly life is fleeting and that we need God.
- **Sincere repentance:** It is not enough to feel remorse for our sins; we must genuinely desire change and seek reconciliation with God and others.
- **Returning to the path of holiness:** Conversion is not a one-time event but a continuous process. The Christian life is a pilgrimage toward holiness, where each day is a new opportunity to draw closer to God.

Conversion is not based on our own strength but on **God's grace**. As St. Paul says: *"By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain"* (1 Cor 15:10).

2. Believing in the Gospel: What Does It Mean to Have Faith?

Faith is not simply acknowledging that God exists or memorizing the Church's doctrines. Believing in the Gospel means:

1. **Welcoming the Good News** with an open and willing heart. The Gospel is not just a



book; it is the living message of salvation that transforms lives.

2. **Placing full trust in God.** True faith means abandoning self-sufficiency and trusting that God guides our lives, even in trials and darkness.
3. **Putting Christ's teachings into practice.** Faith without works is dead (cf. Jas 2:17). Believing in the Gospel means living according to its values: charity, truth, humility, and total surrender to God and others.

Jesus does not call us to a lukewarm or superficial faith. He expects from us a total commitment: *"If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Lk 9:23).

3. The Ashes: A Symbol of Our Fragility and a Call to Conversion

The imposition of ashes reminds us of three fundamental truths:

1. **Our mortal condition:** "Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return" (Gen 3:19). In a world obsessed with success and self-sufficiency, ashes remind us that our lives are fleeting and that only in God do we find meaning and eternity.
2. **The vanity of human securities:** Many times, we seek fulfillment in money, power, or pleasures. The ashes confront us with reality: all material things are passing; only God remains.
3. **The need for God's mercy:** We are fragile and sinful, but God offers us His infinite love. He never tires of forgiving us and calling us to Him.

4. How to Live This Call in Our Daily Lives

The call to conversion and faith in the Gospel is not just for Lent but for every day of our lives. Some concrete ways to respond to this call include:

A. Deepening in Prayer

Prayer is the first step toward sincere conversion. St. Augustine said: *"He who prays well, lives well."* Dedicate time each day to speaking with God, reading Scripture, and listening to His voice in silence.



B. Frequent Confession

The Sacrament of Reconciliation allows us to experience God's mercy. Confession is not just about "erasing sins" but about strengthening our souls in spiritual battle.

C. Practicing Charity

Jesus taught us that love for our neighbor is the distinguishing mark of His disciples (cf. Jn 13:35). Living the Gospel means loving concretely: forgiving, helping, serving, and giving our lives for others.

D. Renouncing What Draws Us Away from God

Each of us knows what enslaves us: bad habits, vices, pride, resentments... Conversion involves a daily struggle against everything that distances us from Christ.

E. Proclaiming the Gospel with Courage

Believing in the Gospel also means sharing it. In a world that moves away from God, Christians are called to be light and a testimony of hope.

Conclusion: A Path of Hope and Eternity

The phrase **"Convert and believe in the Gospel"** is not a sentence of condemnation but an invitation to hope. God does not call us to conversion to humiliate us but to elevate us, to make us partakers of His eternal life.

Now more than ever, in a world searching for answers in fleeting things, Christ offers us the only answer that truly satisfies the human heart: **His love, His forgiveness, and His salvation.**

May this Lent be a time of grace, renewal, and true return to God for all of us. As the prophet Joel tells us: *"Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in mercy"* (Joel 2:13).

Today is the day of conversion. Today is the time to believe and live the Gospel. Let us not delay any longer!