

Commitment to Growth (Conversatio)

One of the three vows a monk makes as an aid to searching for God, is *Conversatio*: conversion of life, the way of formation and transformation, way of life, conduct or behavior. The Benedictine word for this way of life is *conversatio*, the process of letting go of self-centered preoccupations and false securities in day-to-day life so that the divine life at the core of one's being becomes manifest in a trustworthy pattern of living. This term has been loosely translated as 'conversion of morals' and also as 'fidelity to the monastic life'.

St. Benedict saw "conversion" both as a moment in time when we turn towards God and as a continual process of growth. He believed that movement toward God may begin with one turning, but it must continue with the many small choices of daily living.

Conversion of life involves listening to the people around us and truly hearing what they see in us that needs changing. It includes embracing conflict as a way in which God teaches us about things in ourselves that need to be changed, while turning to God for healing and forgiveness.

On the blog "Catholic Beer Club," Br. Ignacio Gonzalez, OSB writes that the Benedictine practice or *Conversatio* requires that we never stop asking hard questions about our personal growth. "Am I growing in my true identity as a son or daughter of God? Or, am I living a lie, allowing myself to be conformed to every whim and temptation of my fallen nature?" To complete our personal transformation, we never stop changing. We always can go deeper in prayer, grow more open to the truth, enrich our understanding of the will of God, and learn what, in this moment at this time, is good, acceptable, and right. (Spiritual Practices Taught by The Rule of St. Benedict by Tracy Rittmueller)

Esther de Waal, in *Living With Contradiction: An Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality*, affirms the value of Benedict's "very simple message that we all need to hear: being committed to God is not about being nice, it is about being real." Conversion of life calls us to continuous self-honesty and involves a humility and openness that listens hard to the people around us as they help us see ourselves more clearly. The same humility and openness enables us to hear God.

"It is time for us to rise from sleep." St. Benedict of Nursia