

Saints *Alive!*

A Periodic Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Issue
21

Changing Lives—Transformation

By Rich Cleveland

Transformation is in fact the remaking of a believer into a new creation shaped by the love of Christ so that our old nature of living strictly for ourselves continually dissipates.

Transformation, and conversion (*Saints Alive!* Issue 20), describe processes in the development of missionary disciples, or stages in their spiritual journey. Both transformation and conversion are results which can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. However, through Christ we, as members of his Body the Church, have also been invited to participate in this process, in fact we have been commanded to participate when Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ...” (Matthew 28:19).

Saint Paul describes the expected result of transformation; “that those who live might live *no longer for themselves but for him* who for their sake died and was raised”.¹ Transformation is in fact the remaking of a believer into a new creation shaped by the love of Christ so that our old nature of living strictly for ourselves continually dissipates. Though change often seems ever so slow, our attitudes and way of life are in fact changed into a new nature that lives more completely for Christ and for those for whom he died. This is the Great Exchange that we describe as amazing grace; wherein Christ has given to us “his precious and very great promises, that through these [promises] you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and [we] become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

Obviously, there are a lot of elements which the Holy Spirit uses to bring about transformation, and that is where we participate in helping form people to be Christ’s disciples—by “teaching them” as the above words of Jesus specify and as the New Testament continually affirms. For instance, Paul in Romans 12 explains that we are not to simply conform to the world’s ways and live in

the world looking and acting just like everyone else, but that we are to be transformed; presenting our lives to Christ as a sacrifice of thanksgiving in response to the mercy and love he has shown us. Saint Paul attributes this reorientation of life to having had our minds renewed in Christ in a way that enables us not only to distinguish what is the good and acceptable way to live, but also to empower us to live that way. This renewal process, this transformation, primarily comes about as we learn to know and meditate upon sacred Scripture.

I love the way Pope Benedict XVI explains it; “I wish once more to encourage all the People of God, pastors, consecrated persons and the laity, to become increasingly familiar with the sacred Scriptures. We must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on *the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church*. This deepening relationship with the divine word will take place with even greater enthusiasm if we are conscious that, in Scripture and the Church’s living Tradition, we stand before God’s definitive word on the cosmos and on history.”²

These days it seems everyone is looking for a new gimmick, new terminology, a new podcast or program that will produce disciples formed in the faith, and lo and behold the solution as Pope Benedict points out, is as old as is the Church. It is the method the Savior used with his companions who became disciples and apostles—help people to know and embrace Jesus, the Living Word, and his Church, by knowing intimately, and embracing wholeheartedly the written word, sacred Scripture. However, the problem with this solution is that it cannot be easily accomplished within a sixty-minute class once a week. It cannot be done by simply telling, it must involve intensive dialog over sacred

Inside this Issue

- From the Heart
- Saint Ignatius of Loyola
- The Dills: A Ministry of Transformation
- Tools You Can Use

continued on final page

From the Heart

By Henry Abeyta

In this issue we focus on the process of Christian life change as *on-going transformation* that takes place as we follow Jesus. This implies that our destination is fundamentally changed; from the life-path we determine, to discovering the life-map God intends for us as part of his creation.

For me the word “transformation” recalls an image of a caterpillar as it forms its larval cocoon. After some time passes and underlying processes do their work, a beautiful butterfly emerges. In the spiritual realm Holy Scripture, community, and the Sacraments are fundamental tools that God uses in our spiritual transformation process to unveil the beloved saint he intends us to be.

As I look at myself in a mirror, my reflection tells me something about my outward appearance. Gazing into a mirror using the lens of Holy Scripture allows us to examine our spiritual condition and to open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit transforming our very souls! This enables us to fundamentally see and understand what God intends as fruit from our lives. Our growth in spiritual understanding when acted upon, shifts our very life-path from that which I solely determine to embracing the life-maps of God.

James captures this concept in James 1:23–25 (NABRE) “Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.” As does Jacques Philippe in this quote from *Called to Life*;

“God’s Word is something like a mirror by which we can truly know ourselves, good as well as bad. It passes judgment on our compromises with sin, our attempts to have it both ways and say yes as well as no, but it also highlights and encourages what is best in us.”¹

It is natural that my desires and self-interests drive my default perspective. As a follower of Jesus, my orientation shifts with openness to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit. The transformation takes place not in isolation, but as I live my life in community with other Christians, broken like me, in service to those around us. In this diversity and tension with other broken people with a commitment to preserve our unity, we see images of God.

“When, in a moment of doubt or confusion, we accept a word of Scripture by an act of faith, the authority that belongs to this word becomes our support and strength. It is not a magic wand, immunizing us against perplexity and anguish. ... Accepted with faith, God’s Word has the power to put an end to the ebb and flow of our uncertain reasonings, to establish us in truth and peace, to confer upon us the hope that is ‘an anchor of the soul, sure and firm’ (Heb 6:19).”²

Now we are empowered for this journey, anchored, transcending our time-bound reality through the Sacraments, channels of God’s grace. Through the Eucharist, we are strengthened, recognize God’s presence, and return to tell those around us. We are transformed into an extension of Jesus himself operating out of love to those in our world. Thus, we see this process in Luke 24:30–31, “And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him ...”

With the Holy Scriptures, in community with one another, and in the Sacraments, transformation is possible, and like the butterfly each of us is unveiled in beauty as loved by God. In this issue we introduce Michael and Rachel Dill who joined the mission of Emmaus Journey in 2015. I pray that their story of transformation inspires you as you live out your calling!

Henry Abeyta became Director of Emmaus Journey in January 2012. With its establishment as a tax exempt 501c(3) organization in 2014, Henry has served as its President. He and Darlene are the parents of two sons and two grandsons. Henry retired from Sandia National Laboratories where he worked for 30 years and in the latter part of his career received significant experience in the international arena. He and Darlene are long-time members of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish.



Henry Abeyta

Emmaus Journey

MISSION:

Emmaus Journey is a lay Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry which partners with parishes, small groups and individuals to facilitate a personal encounter with and conversion to Christ, thereby forming missionary disciples actively living for Jesus.

VISION:

By encountering Christ through scripture, discipleship and community—individuals experience: 1) conversion to Christ; 2) transformation in Christ; and 3) mobilization for Christ, where they are actively involved in sharing their faith with others and living out their faith in the greater community. Thus achieving Goal One of the USCCB’s initiative on evangelization, “To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.”



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1. From *Called to Life*, Jacques Philippe, page 37.

2. *Ibid*, page 44.

Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

The man known as Ignatius of Loyola was born Inigo Lopez de Loyola in 1491 in Loyola, Spain, and was raised as a member of the local aristocracy and was raised accordingly.

Ignigo was raised to be a courtier and diplomat in service to the crown, he received an education in the ideal qualifications of a knight, including courtesy, generosity, valor, and dexterity in arms. He spent some time as a page at court. He was a fancy dresser, an expert dancer, a womanizer, sensitive to insults, and a rough character who used his privileged status to escape prosecution for several violent crimes committed during carnival time.

As a member of the aristocracy he was part of a tiny band of Spanish soldiers trying to defend the fortress town of Pamplona. He would hold off the French single-handedly, but a French cannonball shattered his leg and put an end to his stand. Admiring the courage of the man, the French carried him back home to his castle of Loyola.

Unfortunately, his leg was not the only thing that had been shattered. His self-image as a handsome, dashing courtier—everything that he had ever lived for—was shattered, too.

To pass the time while he recovered, he asked for the kind of books he enjoyed reading: romances of chivalry. But the only reading available in the house was an illustrated Life of Christ and a book of saints' legends. He spent hours dreaming. He dreamt of the exploits he

would do in service to his king and in honor of the royal lady he was in love with. But he would also dream about the exploits he could do to imitate St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic in fidelity to his heavenly Lord.

Gradually, he began to reflect on these experiences; he noticed what was going on within. Both kinds of daydreams engaged him completely, but after the romantic chivalry dreaming was over, he felt empty and dissatisfied, whereas after the spiritual dreaming ended, he still felt a deep peace, a quiet happiness.

He recorded his experiences in a notebook and would soon find his jottings helpful in guiding others. These notes which he continued to revise and expand over time became his *Spiritual Exercises*. Eventually, they were published and then reprinted again and again and translated into many languages as they spread around the world.

Today, nearly 500 years later, Jesuits, other priests and religious, and an ever larger number of professional men and women use these *Spiritual Exercises* to guide others toward spiritual transformation, to a deeper relationship with God.

Adapted from: "Saint Ignatius of Loyola", Franciscan Media, Post by Fr. Don, Miller, OFM



The Dills: A Ministry of Transformation

The first two definitions of Transformation in the *New Oxford American Dictionary* are:

- 1) "a thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance" and
- 2) "a metamorphosis during the life cycle of an animal".

The first definition brings to mind a dramatic conversion and rapid life change like Saint Paul experienced. The second definition brings to mind a slower, perhaps more painstaking process, like Saint Peter's transformation from a headstrong, misguided disciple to become the guide and leader of the apostles.

The testimonies people enjoy hearing are usually those of the first kind—dramatic and quick. But the spiritual experience of most disciples appears more like a slow metamorphosis over a lifetime.

Mike and Rachel Dill, a staff couple with Emmaus Journey since 2015, identify with that slow metamorphosis, but have also learned to see it for the *dramatic* change it is. Even though a caterpillar may spend three quarters of its life without wings, we still marvel when it emerges as a butterfly from its cocoon!

Mike's Catholic faith grew and led him to evangelization and a time of seriously discerning a call to the priesthood. Rachel's faith also grew as she witnessed the love of Christian families who modeled hospitality and invested their lives one-on-one by opening their homes to others. Little did they know that these years would transform and empower them both for the mission they're living today.

As Emmaus Journey staff, they see this transformation at work in the lives of people in whom they invest their lives. In our highly mobile society today, it's rare that we will get to see the complete end-to-end experience of transformation within a person's life. It's more likely that we will be planting and watering spiritual seeds that will grow after someone departs from our community. While they're with us, we can teach them to follow Christ and be fed through the Word and the Sacraments. This "long-game" perspective frees us to be patient and accompany people in their growth process without an artificial timeline.

When we converse with God about these things, he lets us in on his eternal perspective, and we can recognize the dramatic transformations taking place in lives. This inspires us to labor faithfully knowing that "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." (1 Corinthians 3:7 (RSVCE))



The Catholic Topical Memory System

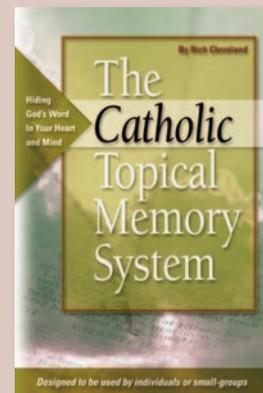
Why Memorize and Meditate on Scripture?

The Bible is foundational to our life and health in Jesus Christ. The Psalmist says that the Scripture revives the soul, makes wise the simple, causes joy in our heart and enlightens our understanding (Psalm 19:7–10). The individual who is serious about following God will become a student of sacred Scripture, finding that as he meditates on it and aligns his life with it that the benefits will far outweigh the effort expended.

We memorize scripture to:

1. Follow Jesus example — “Catholics are first and foremost called to be followers of Jesus Christ.”
2. Enhance our meditation — “We benefit from sacred Scripture when we are able to think about it, grasp its meaning and apply it to our daily lives.”
3. Equip us for life and ministry — “... many times, in moments of crisis, or in opportunities for ministry, the Holy Spirit would use some memorized passage to provide guidance or assistance...”
4. Learn our way around the bible — “As you begin to memorize key verses you will not only gain insight into those passages but they will also provide invisible bookmarks in your memory to help you find your way around the bible.”

In response to this need, Emmaus Journey has developed *Hiding God's Word in Your Heart and Mind: The Catholic Topical Memory System*. This small- group resource enables Catholics to become strong in their knowledge of the Scripture by combining Bible study discussion on thirty-five important topics of spiritual formation with an effective plan for Scripture memorization. Additionally, each book comes with 35 perforated verse cards and a handsome verse card holder.



Changing Lives—Transformation continued from front page

Scripture. The person being formed must be given an opportunity to process truth and understand its implications, rather than like a baby bird simply open one's mouth and have pre-processed food regurgitated into it. It involves personal discovery and the development of life-long habits.

One can understand the bewildering cry, “But that would take so much time!” It does. It took the Savior of the world time, about three years of concentrated time, to inculcate truth into the lives of his small band of men, but he was not simply filling up a program slot, he was preparing people to give their life to turn the world upside down with the Good News. Then again, Jesus had known since before time that, “all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on *the word of God*.” Throughout *Verbum Domini* Pope Benedict repeats this truth and calls us to return to formation based on the “divine word,” as in the following, “The laity need to be trained to discern God's will through a familiarity with his word, read and studied in the Church under the guidance of her legitimate pastors. They can receive this training at the school of the great ecclesial spiritualities, all of which are grounded in sacred Scripture.”³ If we are excited about seeing people transformed, and desire to be involved in the formation process we can engage in no more fruitful activity than helping disciples engage deeply with sacred Scripture, over a sustained period of time, until living for Christ and others becomes their way of life.

Jesus said, “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me,” (John 5:39). The significance of building your formation process around Scripture is that it is through the Scriptures that we behold Christ. It is not just about learning facts and learning truths, it is about seeing and learning Jesus; meditating on him, dialoging with him, sitting at his feet beholding him, allowing his thoughts and way of life to seep and to sink deeply within us. In 2 Corinthians 3:15–18 Saint Paul explains that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed [transformed] into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” This process requires a commitment to prayer and adoration prior to, during, and after these encounters with Jesus through the Scripture.

May the Holy Spirit awaken in us and those we help form, a hunger and thirst for Jesus, the Word of God, until we become “partakers of his divine nature.”

Rich Cleveland is the founder of Emmaus Journey and was its first Director. He and his wife continue to serve Emmaus Journey, and live in Colorado Springs, Colo.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 RSVCE
2. The Word of the Lord (Verbum Domini), a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, by Pope Benedict XVI, paragraph 121
3. Ibid; paragraph 84