



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

21 January 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Metanoia *\me-tə-'noi-ə *

Greek word in the New Testament translated as "change of mind" or "change of heart." It corresponds with the Old Testament word for repentance and the Latin *conversio*, turning or returning, from which derives the idea of *conversion*. *Turning* is key, assuming we have lost our way or gone off course.

Pronunciation: <http://tinyurl.com/Take5-metanoia>

CONTEXT

Community takes transformation. Being people of communion requires **metanoia** that results from encounter and dialogue.

—Sister Nicole Trahan, *F.M.I.*

Far from being a demand to feel lousy about our screw-ups, **metanoia** invites us to radically transform the way we perceive others, ourselves, and the world.

—David Anderson

Metanoia invites us to meet all situations, however unfair, with understanding and an empathetic heart.

—Father Ronald Rolheiser, *O.M.I.*

WHY IT MATTERS

The willingness to change is a crucial ingredient in a life of integrity. On the journey through the years, we will all be confused or misdirected and swerve off the path of truth. **Metanoia** is the much-needed spiritual course correction. Consider **metanoia** the vital summons to recalculate where we're headed and what needs to change for us to get there.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Jesus' call to conversion and repentance, does not aim first at outward works, but at the *conversion of the heart, interior conversion*. [H]owever, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures, and works of penance (1430).

RELATED WORDS

Conversion | Penance | Contrition | Transformation

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What does it mean to repent?

Repentance doesn't necessarily require falling on our knees and beating our breasts, though sometimes that may be the appropriate response—as it was for skeptical Thomas, when the resurrected Lord whom he'd doubted stood before him. Basically, to repent means to change course. That can mean movement if we've been standing still, or stopping if we've been in frantic motion. It can mean changing our minds or our hearts, our direction or our behavior.

The word has several important root meanings. The earliest is the Hebrew word *t'shuvah*: return. It's a crucial concept to prophets like Amos, Hosea, and Jeremiah. Their fellow citizens have wandered far from God's ways, and it's time for them to return home. *Metanoia* is the New Testament Greek term that carries a similar meaning. John the Baptist first issues the call to change direction, signaled by Baptism. Jesus uses this term when he invites his listeners to change their dispositions—to turn their hearts and lives around—in response to his teaching. Repentance carries the additional meaning of expressing regret for past actions and attitudes—along with the expectation that real change is forthcoming. In addition, the word *conversion* means turning around, implying a reorientation of intentions and actions. In the sacrament of Reconciliation, we include the stipulation of "making reparation" for what we've done or failed to do that has caused harm.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <https://tinyurl.com/QCA-repent>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE (JANUARY 25)

Take the next turn toward truth

The amazing thing about Saint Paul's conversion was that he went from persecutor of Christians to a devout Christian himself. The change in him was so incredible not everyone believed it at first. His turnaround was a complete about-face toward Jesus.

READINGS: Acts 22:3-16 or 9:1-22; Mark 16:15-18 (519 <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/012518.cfm>). "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

FAITH IN ACTION

With God's help, you can bring about conversion in your own life. Start with a simple act of forgiveness.