

Some people say that the Church began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. I would say rather that the Church was officially launched at Pentecost but it began with the calling of the first apostles as the Gospel relates to us today. However, whether it began at Pentecost or with the calling of the first apostles the initial proclamation of the Gospel is the same: Repent and believe in the Gospel. If we ask the same Holy Spirit which came down on the apostles to reveal areas in our lives where we need to repent, He will surely answer us. As it says in the Gospel of John: 'The Spirit will convict us of sin' I would say that the whole Gospel could be summed up in one continuous call to repentance, to see things from a different angle, to allow the heart of stone to crumble within us. There are two types of people in the Gospel – those who repent and those who don't. The ones that didn't were responsible for putting Jesus on the Cross. The ones who did understood what the Kingdom of God was about.

St Peter, who was called as an apostle in the first reading today understood all too well what repentance means – His first acknowledgement of his need for repentance was what he said to Jesus: 'Depart from me I am a sinful man'. This was a defining moment of conversion for him. His second moment of repentance was after the denial when he shed tears of sorrow. St Ambrose says that the waters of baptism and the tears of repentance are intimately connected.

Repentance is not confined to a one-off experience – it is like being on a continuous learning curve. The apostles passed the 'repentance test' because even though Jesus admonished and chided them on several occasions for their lack of insight or lack of repentance they never left him like some of His other disciples did. Judas left of his own accord. It is interesting to note that Jesus never embarrassed Judas even at the last Supper. The door of repentance was always open to him - as it is to us. We need to pray for a deeper repentance. Fr Scanlon, an American Franciscan recounts the story of a retreat which he led on a catholic university campus in America. They prayed that a spirit of

repentance would fall on the students.....it surely did.....at 4am they were still hearing.

However, repentance is not just limited to Confession. At the end of each day we should examine our conscience and see if we need to say sorry for anything during the day. St Paul says we should 'confess our sins to one another'. We need to get into the habit of repenting to each other. ....husband to wife, wife to husband, parents to children..... the priest to his congregation. ....

So perhaps we could all examine our conscience and pray that a spirit of repentance will fall on us, will fall on me....I need to hear the voice of Jesus like the people of Nineveh heard the voice of Jonah calling me further along the road of repentance and change. It becomes part of who I am as a catholic Christian.