



Belonging to God's Family

I was baptized when I was 11 days old. Ho Hum! I have been *inside the fold* all of my life. Ho Hum! I have never known what it feels like not to be included in the *family of God*. For this I am truly grateful.

However, I have missed out on radical shifts in my life that would dramatize the overwhelming power of God's Holy Spirit working within me. I haven't been shaken mercilessly and jerked around to move in the opposite direction which can characterize dramatic conversion such as that experience of one named Saul who became the St. Paul of the early Christian Church and of our New Testament.

I do not know what it is like to live on that other side of the fence nor how it feels to experience a *traumatic* conversion. Could it be like coming out of a tunnel from darkness into light?

I read recently of an avowed and quite vocal atheist who under duress attended his daughter's confirmation class. He ended up being baptized as an adult after doing a total about face.

For those of us who have been guided so gently through the maze of a Christian life, we cannot identify with such a radical shift in a person's life that gets changed so dramatically.

While infant baptism is the preferred way to enter God's family in my tradition, there is something to be said for later in life conversion experiences. As in the case of the Saul/Paul conversion, there appears to be a radicalizing effect that sets new converts on a course that has tremendous impact on everything they touch. It is as if there has been a storing up of tremendous spiritual energy that gets released in ways that make a huge difference. Adoption into God's family at any time in life is a wonderful experience.

While I am grateful for the longevity of my belonging to the family of God, the contrast between life before and after a later-in-life spiritual conversion would always stand out as a memorable bench mark and a double reason to celebrate. The *new life* in the later scenario will never be taken for granted which can be a hazard for those of us who have been practically born into it.

We all have profound reason to be extremely grateful regardless of when or how we enter God's family. Pause now to express your gratitude in a moment of simple prayer and do so every morning when you first awaken. This is the way to start a new day!

