

The "Hokey Pokey" is a song dating from the 1940s written by British band leader Al Tabor. The term "Hokey Pokey" is British slang for ice cream, and it is even the name of a vanilla toffee flavored ice cream in New Zealand.

The song is, of course accompanied by simple actions in a dance of sorts, that can be done by just about anyone - young or old, coordinated or clumsy, pretty much anyone can take part.

The lyrics are, of course:

*You put your right hand in,  
You take your right hand out,  
You put your right hand in,  
And you shake it all about.  
You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself around.  
That's what it's all about.*

Which is then repeated with different parts - such as the left hand, right and left foot, elbows, knees, head, and finally your whole self.

I have fond memories of high school dances and wedding receptions where nearly the entire assembled crowd would pile onto the dance floor and join in the fun.

Today's readings focus on the theme of repentance, conversion, and the forgiveness of sin.

I know as well as you that most people stiffen up when they hear the words repentance and conversion. We think of certain stereotypes - maybe of a slick, well-groomed television evangelist wearing an expensive suit and lots of fine jewelry ... Covered in a sheen of sweat as he calls out to the crowd in a loud voice to repent. Or perhaps it's the image of a rough looking sidewalk prophet carrying a sign that reads "Repent! The end is near."

But that's not where I am going with this.

If we delve a little deeper into the meaning of the word "repent," we find that in the original Greek, it is the word *metanoia* - which means "to change the mind."

That's not so bad. We change our minds all the time. Do I want chocolate or vanilla? Maybe Butter Pecan?

What Scripture is asking us to do is be ready to change our minds on anything that may be an obstacle to our relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Otherwise, whatever that is might become a barrier to the grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And if we look again at the Greek, and the word "convert," we find that the original word is *epistrepho* - which means to "turn yourself around." Again, not an overly complicated or difficult thing to accomplish.

Where Scripture is leading us in this case is that we all do things a certain way. Sometimes we can get stuck in our ways; and other times, we may have gone along a way that isn't taking us closer to God anymore. Maybe we are walking with Christ, but somehow we've gotten too far ahead of Him, and He's calling out to us to "turn around," come back to Him, and go along the way at His pace ... With him at our side.

In a nutshell, that's what it's all about - staying close to God ... Walking with Jesus Christ ... Being his hands and feet ... His witnesses in the world ... But sometimes it's not so easy ... And sometimes we end up getting shaken all about.

But if we place our trust in the One who has saved us ... If we rely on the saving grace and power of God that is ours when we put our faith in Christ Jesus ... Our risen Lord who is our life and our salvation ... We become beacons of hope and love ... Filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit ... True disciples of Jesus ... daughters and sons of Almighty God.