

In the book *The Psychopath Test*, author Jon Ronson outlines the foundations, uses, and consequences of contemporary psychiatry - woven among interesting stories and anecdotes - in a popularized non-fiction work.

One of the uses of psychology that I hadn't expected before I read this work was in the field of entertainment television. According to Ronson, producers of talk shows and reality shows were always avidly searching for the "right sort of madness." That is, individuals who might be high-strung enough to rant and rave, but certainly not crazy enough to hurt themselves or someone else.

Television, it seems, has a certain voyeuristic interest in people who were just crazy enough, but not crazy in a way that might impact ratings or alarm censors.

On the other hand, in my own observation, television seems to shun certain areas that one would think most people would consider edifying.

For example, in the wake of the Amish shootings some years back, it seemed that the newscasters lost interest when all the Amish folk would speak of was the need for radical forgiveness in such difficult circumstances. Tabloid news sources often voraciously produce stories about the nasty antics of bad-boy and bad-girl celebrities - yet somehow appear to ignore the conversion stories when someone cleans up their act and sets their life aright.

Unlike contemporary commentators, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles saw fit to record the conversion story of St. Paul not once, but three times. In addition, St. Paul speaks of his own conversion several times in his Epistles.

While conversion stories may not be big news on TV, for us Christians - the witness they provide speaks to us of the humanity of saints - whether living or dead. We can be inspired to know that St. Paul who was once an aggressive murderer of Christians went on to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. Such radical conversion stories may often make our own scruples and difficulties seem small by comparison.

The key factor in any conversion is grace. God's grace. And while His grace infinite and generously available - it requires our own cooperation to be effective. It may also help to realize that conversion is not a once-in-a-lifetime event, but rather is an on-going, continuous thread that unfolds throughout our lifetime. Each of us remains a work-in-progress until we reach Eternity in the Presence of the Godhead.

Let us ask, through the intercession of St. Paul, for an increased openness to God's transforming and powerful grace - that we may allow that grace to effect our own on-going conversion - wherever we may find ourselves at this point in our lives.