

SYNOPSIS OF THE CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL MACLEAN

(This version dated March 3, 2024 replaces any/all previous versions)

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Born in Thibodaux, LA on November 1, 1948

Very soon moved to Houma and grew up there.

Graduated from Nicholls State University in Agriculture on May 24, 1970.

Began employment with Southdown Sugars, Inc. on May 25, 1970.

Married to Judith McIntire from Gibson, LA on May 30, 1970.
(Pray for her, please. She has tolerated me for all these years!)

Two daughters were born:

Laurie - born on May 17, 1971 from which came Carmen.

Jennifer - born on October 12, 1976 from which came Mattew and Nathan and Elizabeth).

From May 25, 1970 through March 1, 1992 my journey produced an out-of-control workaholic that used nearly all the gifts given by God for my own purposes.

On Sunday, March 1, 1992, at about 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm, while sitting on this “love seat”, I experienced hell down to what I believe is the “third torture”.¹



¹ As described by St. Faustina in Paragraph 741 of her diary (selected narrative is shown below).

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At that time in my life, I found myself in the middle of a tumultuous time in my business career that began in 1970. I was being forced to make some personal decisions, by certain business associates (that I thought were friends). My choice to not act as demanded were to soon move to end many of our relationships and eventually turn us into adversaries in many venues. (One of these relationships actually went back to the early 1970's.)

I was very angry about all that. I was angry that I had put so many hours of my life (mostly working 80 to 90 hours per week) alongside these men developing numerous businesses and now I had to start over just because I chose to not break some very serious environmental laws that my so-called "partners" were coercing me to expressly break.²

On that Sunday I was sitting on the small couch shown above (called a "love seat") planning how to start over again. In fact, I had already begun to move in that direction...again! The last words I said in my previous life were:

"This time I am going to do it for me. No partners! No associates! Alone! Just me!"

At that moment, I found myself in a thick grey fog. I could hear my wife and my two daughters on the other side of it laughing and enjoying themselves. They were incredibly happy being together. Joyful! I was not with them. I also knew that I could never be with them again...ever! Due to my choices, I had placed myself in that place...forever!!! Hopelessly alone! Lost! I instinctively knew I had individually made those choices. And, I was simply guilty! There was no pleading my case. I knew that this state of being hopelessly alone was going to last forever and would never end. It was horrible and I had freely chosen it. By my choices, I had separated myself from my family, my God, and even from myself for all eternity and there was nothing I could do about it, once there. By my choices, I had turned myself into someone other than God had planned for me.

Having processed all that just as instantly, I found myself back on the couch in my home. I was nauseated. My heart was about to blow out of my chest. I felt faint and weak. I spontaneously and audibly asked the following question to myself, never conceiving that I would have been immediately answered. My simple question was:

"WHAT WAS THAT?"

Very clearly, a man's voice unexpectedly and very firmly, but calmly, answered me immediately:

**"UNLESS YOU CHANGE YOUR WAYS AND FOLLOW ME
THAT IS HOW YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY."**

² Interesting note is that I decided to make those correct decisions **before** my conversion. Only by the Grace of God!

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After hearing that answer, I knew instantly that my life had to change. It could never be or act the same. I must make different choices. I had no idea where that change would take me, but I knew it had to take a different direction or I was going to experience that “hellish” experience not just for a day but forever. That experience reprioritized my whole life in a trice.³

I could not sleep that night. I had to go to the sacrament of confession immediately! I did not want to die in that state of grave sin. I had to begin confessing my sins of years past or that recent experience was my eternal outcome. So, in the next morning of March 2, 1992, I was waiting at the St. Francis de Sales Cathedral front door at 6:00 am to go to my first confession in 20+ years with Monsignor Joe Latino.⁴ (Mass was at 6:30 am.) That began an intense effort to convert, repent and make reparation. God sent Fr. Duane Stenzel, OFM into my life as a spiritual director and friend by the end of June, 1992.⁵ That journey of constant conversion continues even today – offering up my actions today in reparation for the previous years sin, and the damages I caused as well as my further failings of the most recent years.

Conversion is an ongoing effort only accomplished through the Grace of God! Those graces are abundantly available, if we open ourselves up to them. (First, we must understand they are necessary.) My journey since that day in 1992 can be described for hours depending on the demand and one’s interest to know more. The journey that day has led me in many directions that I never thought I would go over the last 30+ years.

My business career (more projects) no longer was my god. God remolded my business into a one-man operation and then used it to bring me to many places in Louisiana and elsewhere to do his work of evangelization...while still providing me the income my family needed.... not necessarily wanted. I took with me in that journey many of the skills I earlier learned and used pre-conversion (and since my conversion) used as well but now I am compelled to try and use them for the Honor and Glory of God. Sometimes I did/do that successfully. Sometimes I failed/fail. But, I do all in His name so even my failures, made in good faith, are covered by His Grace and Mercy.

To better explain the experience of March 1, 1992, years later, I found *Paragraph 741 of St. Faustina’s Diary*. What she saw and wrote about was the closest thing I have ever seen and/or read about the experience of March 1, 1992. As I read, I knew what I had experienced was hell down to the “third torture”. There is no doubt about it. ⁶ (Italics below is what I experienced that day, which changed me forever.)

³ Later, I discovered that the experience itself was remarkably close to a phenomenon that the “Desert Fathers” termed “compunction”. Compunction being: “remorse, contrition (for wrongdoing, as a means of attaining forgiveness of one’s sins)...

⁴ Later Bishop Latino of the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi.

⁵ Both Bishop Joseph Latino and Fr. Duane Stenzel are deceased today.

⁶ I can write more about this torture and the tortures below it but will not at this time. Maybe later.

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Diary of St. Faustina, Paragraph 741

741. Today, I was led by an Angel to the chasms of hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of tortures I saw: *the first torture that constitutes hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one's condition will never change*⁷; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it—a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God's anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and

a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies. These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of the sufferings.

There are special tortures destined for particular souls.

These are the torments of the senses.

Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned.

There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, in those senses which he made use of to sin. I am writing this at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like.

⁷ These bolded and italicized words are the level I experienced. Any lower and my body would not have been able to tolerate its horribleness.

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I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. I cannot speak about it now; but I have received a command from God to leave it in writing. The devils were full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God. What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are Those who disbelieved that there is a hell. When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners. I incessantly plead God's mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin.
(End of selected narrative.)

Of course, after that experience my circle of associates totally changed. No longer could I live being so self-centered, as I had been. Months later, while repeatedly seeking answers about which old and new associates I could trust trying to do His work, one day I simply asked.

LORD! WHO CAN I TRUST?

Jesus answered me immediately! It was a familiar voice. That same male voice I heard on March 1, 1992 said very clearly:

**“YOU CAN TRUST SOMEONE
ONLY AS MUCH AS THEY TRUST IN ME.”**

That is a matter of knowing someone's heart. That can only be discerned by grace, over time and in walking with person, in time, in the heat of spiritual battles...while we are both being sifted by the devil!

It is at times difficult to discern the sincerity of one's own heart in certain matters. So, it becomes increasingly difficult to discern another's heart. We must tread very carefully. The scriptures address that exact dilemma in John 2:24-25 whereby it reads: *But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.*

NON C'EST TOUT!