2. Deus Revelatus
[III] Conversion—Penitence*1

Well known—

Penance/penitence translates the Latin 'penitentia', which in turn translates the Greek 'metanoia' [μετανοια is strictly a NT word indicating a break with the past and a living commitment of attitudes in response to believing the teaching about the kingdom of God] = a change of mind, change of thought. This, in turn, translates the Hebrew 'shubah' [שׁוּבָה return (in the sense of doing a 'u-turn')].

Best word to translate, however, would be—

'CONVERSION' in that it best captures the 'ongoing process' involved in a life surrendered to sanctification—the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. *2
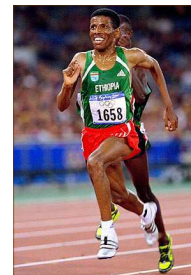
**Rule, 7
wisely reminds us**

United by their vocation as brothers and sisters of penance, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "conversion". Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

1. Conversion must be understood as a son's return to the Father:
And he arose and came to his father...And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."...But the father said, "...this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." [Lk 15.20ff]

2. Conversion is persevering in a race in which victory is guaranteed:
Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith…[Heb 12.2]

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*1 see also 'History of the Secular Franciscan Order', sheet 2, The 'Order of Penitence' in History
*2 Nowhere is the conversion experience better described than by Augustine. 'The *Confessions* are not Augustine's autobiography. They are, instead, a deliberate effort, in the permissive atmosphere of God's presence, to recall those crucial episodes and events in which he can now see and celebrate the mysterious actions of God's...grace...We observe two separate stages in Augustine's "conversion". The first was the dramatic striking off of the slavery of incontinence and pride which had so long held him from decisive commitment to the Christian faith. The second was the development of an adequate understanding of the Christian faith itself and his baptismal confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.' [Augustine: *Confession and Enchiridion*, LCC Vol I, Introduction].

3. Conversion is Christian kenosis:

I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong. [II Cor 12.9f]

4. Conversion is real satisfaction, real contentment, real power:

Not that I complain of want, for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty, hunger abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. [Phil 4.11-13]

Soldier, soldier, fighting in the world's great strife,
On yourself relying, battling for your life:
Trust yourself no longer,
Trust to Christ, he's stronger:
'I can all things, all things do
Through Christ who strengths me.'

In your daily duty, standing up for right,
Are you sometimes weary, heart not always light?
Doubt your Saviour never,
This your motto ever:
'I can all things, all things do
Through Christ who strengthens me.'

Jesus' power is boundless—boundless as the sea;
He is always able, able to keep me—
Power bring from my weakness,
Glory from my meekness:
'I can all things, all things do
Through Christ who strengthens me.'

5. Conversion is life with a capital "L":

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. [John 10.10]