

JANUARY 25, 2020  
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, the Apostle  
Mark 16: 15-18

DOCILITY AND OPENNESS

Today we are celebrating the life and conversion of St. Paul, one of the greatest apostles in our times. He became an apostle to the Gentile nations. From being first opposed to the Gospel that other apostles proclaimed and lived, and being persecutor of Christians to being the greatest apostle of Christ. He was converted when Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:3-16), our First Reading for today. This experienced and encounter of St. Paul with Jesus Christ radically changed his life, transformed his attitude towards Christians and opened his eyes to the truth of the Gospel.

According to Pope Benedict XVI: "Paul's conversion matured in his encounter with the Risen Christ; it was this encounter that radically changed his life. What happened to him on the road to Damascus is what Jesus asks in today's Gospel: Saul is converted because, thanks to the divine light, "he has believed in the Gospel". In this, consists his and our conversion: in believing in Jesus dead and risen and in opening to the illumination of his divine grace. In that moment Saul understood that his salvation did not depend on good works fulfilled according to the law, but on the fact that Jesus died also for him the persecutor and has risen. This truth by which every Christian life is enlightened thanks to Baptism completely overturns our way of life. To be converted means, also for each one of us, to believe that Jesus "has given himself for me", dying on the Cross (cf. Galatians 2: 20) and, risen, lives with me and in me. Entrusting myself to the power of his forgiveness, letting myself be taken by his hand, I can come out of the quick sands of pride and sin, of

deceit and sadness, of selfishness and of every false security, to know and live the richness of his love." (Angelus address given on January 25, 2009)<sup>1</sup>

Only in love that a person can be a living Word of God. For an apostle to be a good preacher, he must love first and live that love. St. Paul after his conversion did not automatically become a saint. He became an apostle, a holy man, a saint because he loved. He loved and served everyone as a child of God, and this brought others to an encounter with Christ like he encountered Christ in Damascus. For St. Paul, he emptied himself so that God can fill him with His love, and then share, give and pour it to others – the evangelization that worked for Paul and can work for us. We don't receive His love and mercy to keep it to ourselves but to give it to others.

Pope Francis pointed out that, "even though he was stubborn, St. Paul was not hard-hearted. He was open to God's indications. He had incarcerated and killed Christians with a fire inside him, but as soon as he heard the voice of the Lord, he became like a child, letting himself be led."<sup>2</sup>

So, my sisters and brothers, let us imitate St. Paul in his docility to the voice of the Lord and openness to God's invitation to be an apostle to others. May St. Paul pray for us.

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<sup>1</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana

<sup>2</sup> [www.vaticannews.va](http://www.vaticannews.va)