

April 19, 2024

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Easter



Center for Spiritual Development

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

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Excerpts from Today's First Reading

Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing; so, they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

[Later in the passage, a disciple in Damascus named Ananias has a vision from the Lord and is told to seek out Saul on Straight Street. God says to

Ananias in his vision:] “Go, for this man (Saul) is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.”

ACTS 9:1-9, 15

Reflection

Since my novitiate many years ago, I found St. Paul to be my favorite saint. Many of my friends were a bit shocked by this as I do consider myself a feminist and some of Paul’s preaching seems counter to this. There are a number of reasons why I was captured so profoundly by the life of St. Paul. He was a zealous man and, though he was zealous for the wrong purposes (opposing Jesus and his followers), he was relentless. I admired his commitment and passion, though misguided!

Another reason for being drawn into St. Paul’s story is the conversion we just read about in Acts. Saul, before his conversion, was still able to listen to what the Lord was asking of him. Sometimes it is easy to be so sure of my own beliefs and “rightness” that it’s hard to hear God’s in-breaking presence in my life. Saul heard it and was able to become God’s instrument. This was a powerful message to me as I was learning what it meant to be a Sister of St. Joseph, especially as I learned about living the vows. I would need to listen, be patient, and seek God’s call.

I also admired St. Paul’s commitment to being God’s instrument, especially to the Gentiles. He used reason and wisdom to create space for the Gentiles to become Christians. He traveled far and wide as he discerned what God was asking of him. In the novitiate and throughout my life since then, I strive to remain free enough to go where God is calling me. If God chose Saul/St. Paul to be his instrument, it tells me that God uses each of us to be his instruments as well.



Conversion of St. Paul

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For Pondering

- How does St. Paul's conversion story impact you? Are there insights you can glean from his life and mission?
 - What does conversion mean to you? Have you experienced conversion in your faith journey?
 - St. Paul was able to change his ways after listening to the Lord's call in his life. Are there times in your own life where you responded to a seemingly impossible ask from God?
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For Prayer

*O God who calls each of us by name,
we lift up all those who have yet to respond to you.
May they find their way to you through ordinary and extraordinary means.
May we be conduits of your mercy and love,
seeking to offer assistance to those who desire to find their way back to you.
Amen.*

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