

January 25, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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CHOSEN BY GOD CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

*"I chose you from the world,
to go and bear fruit that will last, says the Lord."*

JOHN 15:16

Reflection

Be still and silent. Listen for the voice of God calling each of us: *"I chose you from the world, to go and bear fruit that will last."* By faith, in our daily reality we belong to God. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires and encourages us to recognize and embrace God's unconditional love. We pray that living from this reality forms our consciousness and our actions.

Today we recall the conversion of St. Paul. His dramatic story of transformation and conversion offers hope that we who are so ordinary can

reset our hearts and minds in greater fidelity to the love of God in our lives. Personal conversion is an ongoing process. We never outgrow the school of self-knowledge that leads to inner transformation.

Formed in the Hebrew tradition, Saul proudly and radically protected his faith tradition to the extreme. From my experience of God, I must say his condoning of violence seems contrary to God's desire and manner of loving unconditionally. Yet, filled with youthful zeal and pride, he took offense at the followers of Jesus, seeing them as betrayers of the Jewish faith. He thought his mission was to persecute the followers of Jesus and stamp out the error of their ways. And then, as reflection and discernment in the ways of God demand, Saul's actions were confronted. In a dramatic encounter on the road to Damascus, hearing the voice of Jesus, he realized the fallacy of his self-righteous actions. How could this be?

Was it St. Stephen's prayer of forgiveness as he was stoned in Saul's presence that haunted him and caused him to question his obsession? Was it the vivid memory of St. Stephen's selfless act of fidelity to Jesus, even in violent death, that moved Saul to question his use of violence in protecting his faith tradition? Did the nagging remembrance of the horror of violence force Saul to see his actions as contrary to the ways of God?

I take encouragement from this bold story of God's abiding presence and confrontation. If Saul could be chosen by God to bear fruit that would last and rename himself Paul, the possibility of our own deepening self-understanding looms large for those of us who live ordinary lives in God's presence

God indeed chose Paul to "bear fruit that would last." In his personal encounter, hearing the voice of Jesus, he embraced conversion with all his soul. After years of prayer, learning, and discernment, Paul engaged a mission to spread the Good News of Jesus in distant lands, to pagans and gentiles. Such was his transformation that he willingly endured everything for the sake of the God whom he loved and served.

St. Paul's writings and preaching passionately reveal the primacy of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in his life. In his conversion, he discovered the assurance of life everlasting in union with the person of Jesus. Daily, St. Paul put on the mind and heart of Christ, and saw life from that perspective.

We are called to do nothing less—to embrace the ongoing transformation of mind and heart to the ways of God reflected in Jesus. We seek to learn, comprehend, integrate, and live in the manner of Jesus' own love, compassion, and forgiveness in all aspects of life. When we say we belong to God, to Jesus

Christ, then we open ourselves to that ongoing transformation. Please God, show us the way to be one in you.



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For Pondering

- What is the strength of my belonging to God?
- How well do I know and claim the heart of God, the mind of Jesus?
- I am chosen. To what am I called so as to bear fruit that will last?

Closing Prayer

Please God teach me your ways, ways that are life-giving, compassionate, and understanding. I do not know the inner workings of others; only you are privy to their reality. Teach me first the ways of patient waiting, and empathy. Please God, show me the way to be one with you in all things and in my awareness of your abiding presence. Amen.

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