

**June 30**

## **ON SAINT PAUL**

### **140.1 First Point**

The most admirable trait in Saint Paul is his ardent and all-embracing zeal. This he showed at first by defending the faith of Moses, in which he had been very well instructed.<sup>661</sup> As he was very knowledgeable and saw that the Christian religion was beginning to spread throughout Judea by the preaching of the apostles, he took every possible step to oppose and destroy it. It was also a consequence of his zeal that he took part in the stoning of Saint Stephen,<sup>662</sup> though he was a relative. Then, having done all he could against the faithful in Jerusalem, he took steps to secure authorization to persecute those in the city of Damascus.<sup>663</sup>

It was his zeal for the law of God that made him undertake all these travels and all these persecutions against the Christians.<sup>664</sup> But he did all this out of ignorance,<sup>665</sup> as he himself states. That was why God did not leave him in error but enlightened him in a completely miraculous manner.

You have the advantage of knowing the truth, and the happiness of having been born and brought up in the Christian religion. You must necessarily consider it your first duty to uphold it. Are you as zealous in this respect as Saint Paul was to preserve the Jewish law? You have an easy means of doing so by instructing children, teaching them the truths and the holy maxims of the Gospel, and strongly opposing everything that the spirit of immorality is able to inspire in them to the contrary.

### **140.2 Second Point**

After Jesus Christ himself had converted Saint Paul and taught him his religion without the help of any man,<sup>666</sup> this saint preached with so much zeal and so much success that, as he himself says, he labored more to spread faith in Jesus Christ than all the other apostles.<sup>667</sup> His whole effort was to procure the conversion of souls, especially the Gentiles, for whom God, he says, by his power had established him as their apostle.<sup>668</sup>

His efforts brought about important results, for he preached in many provinces and performed all sorts of prodigies and miracles to establish Christianity. This made the people want on one occasion to offer a sacrifice to him as though he were a god who had come down from heaven and taken the form of a man.<sup>669</sup> Indeed, he led a life more heavenly than human, for he thought only of drawing souls to God, instructing them, strengthening them, and consoling them.

It is God, by his power and very special goodness, who has called you to give the knowledge of the Gospel to those who have not yet received it. Do you look upon yourselves, then, as ministers of God? Do you fulfill the duties of your work with all possible zeal, and as having to give an account of it to him?

### 140.3 Third Point

Zeal cannot be more genuine and more firm than when it continues in the midst of the greatest sufferings and the most cruel persecutions. It was in this way that Saint Paul's zeal was put to the test. Several times he was thrown into prison; he was wounded many times; often he was almost at death's door because of the beatings given him. Five times he was cruelly scourged, three times beaten with rods, once he was stoned. He was shipwrecked three times and spent a day and a night adrift on the sea; he was in danger of falling into the hands of robbers. Those of his own nation laid ambush for him, as did the Gentiles also. He endured afflictions and sorrow, lengthy nights of prayer, hunger, thirst, and cold;<sup>670</sup> in the midst all these ordeals his zeal never slackened.<sup>671</sup>

In your ministry you need much zeal. Imitate the zeal of this holy apostle so that neither insults nor injuries, neither calumnies nor persecutions of whatever kind, may be able to diminish your zeal in the slightest or force from you a single complaint, considering yourselves to be very happy to suffer for Jesus Christ.<sup>672</sup>

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De La Salle meditates on Saint Peter as a model of faith in his meditation for June 29, and on Saint Paul as a model of zeal in his meditation for June 30, because he wanted to associate the double spirit of his Institute with these two great saints of the Church. Both saints are now celebrated together on June 29.

661 Acts 22:3  
662 Acts 7:58  
663 Acts 9:1-2  
664 Acts 26:11  
665 1 Tim 1:13

666 Gal 1:11  
667 1 Cor 15:10  
668 Gal 2:8  
669 Acts 14:11-13  
670 2 Cor 11:23-27

671 1 Cor 4:11-13  
672 2 Cor 12:10; Acts 21:13