

January 25

## FOR THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

### 99.1 First Point

Saint Paul was so zealous for the observance of the Old Law that with written orders from the High Priest he went throughout Judea wherever he knew there were any Christians in order to persecute them. God, who knew the ardor of his zeal, wanted to employ him in the cause of Jesus Christ whom he was persecuting in his members and in his disciples. In a flash he threw him to the ground and enlightened him with a light from heaven.<sup>551</sup> How fortunate this saint was to be forestalled by grace and in an instant be changed from a persecutor to an apostle and preacher of the Gospel.

Rejoice with this saint over the special favor he received from God, and thank God for the grace he has given you in withdrawing you from the world and calling you to such a holy work of instructing children and leading them to piety.

### 99.2 Second Point

From the moment that grace came to Saint Paul he was faithful to it. Jesus Christ made known to him by a voice from heaven that it was he himself that Paul was persecuting<sup>552</sup> in the Christians. Heeding this voice which spoke to him in order to deliver him from his blindness, he humbly asked Jesus Christ what orders he wished to give him, and what he wanted him to do for him.

Jesus Christ has called you to fulfill his ministry and to teach the poor. Are you as faithful to God's voice as was Saint Paul? Do you correspond as promptly as he did to all the movements of grace? Are you as zealous as he was to fulfill the duties of your work? Do you say with Saint Paul, Lord, what do you want me to do?<sup>553</sup> And are you as prompt to do everything that you learn about what it is that God asks of you.

### 99.3 Third Point

Although God had begun to enlighten Saint Paul by an extraordinary light and had called him by a miraculous voice, still he did not want to make known his divine will to him, but he sent Paul to Ananias, to whom he had revealed what he wanted Paul to do; he wanted Ananias to speak to Paul in God's name.<sup>554</sup>

This is how God wishes you to act when he inspires you with something good to do. By these lights from heaven, he simply wants you to understand that he is asking you to do something that you are not doing, but he does not wish you to proceed on your own, guided solely by these lights from heaven; he wants you to have recourse to your Directors and Superiors, whom he takes care to instruct and whom he has charged to inform you of what you should do. Never trust your own inspirations, nor those that seem to come from God; explain them to those who guide you and submit to their advice.

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Originally this feast was a celebration of the transfer of the body of the Apostle from the Appian Way to the Ostian Way, or more likely the transfer of a relic of the Apostle to some church in Gaul around the tenth century when the feast was first celebrated. Apparently the notion of the change from one place to another became the idea of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. From the beginning this celebration has been near the feast of Saint Peter's Chair in Rome, a fact that is not without significance.

551 Acts 9:3

552 Acts 9:5

553 Acts 9:6

554 Acts 9:3-6, 10-17