

25. January 2026

Feast of the conversion of St. Paul
The greatness of a vocation

Note: Although today is Sunday, we would like to dedicate today's meditation to the liturgical feast that is normally celebrated on 25 January: the Conversion of Saint Paul. The tireless Apostle of the Gentiles has, in fact, become our patron saint for the mission entrusted to us. Those who would prefer to listen to a meditation on today's reading can find the corresponding link at the end of the text.

Acts 22:3-16

"I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cili'cia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gama'li-el, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. "As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.' Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. "And one Anani'as, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

When we start talking about St Paul, it is difficult to come to an end. But what can we highlight from his story? I would like to dwell today on the words that God addressed to him through Ananias, because they show us his vocation:

"The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name".

And St. Paul did not hesitate, either to receive baptism or to bear public witness to the Lord. We know that he wanted to convince the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Acts 18:4). The fire of love burned in him. With untiring zeal he proclaimed the Gospel, in season and out of season (cf. 2 Tim 4:2), and for its sake he was ready to take on unimaginable hardships (cf. 2 Cor 11:24-28). He was a flaming torch that never let itself be extinguished, and until death he remained faithful to his Lord. What would the Church be without St. Paul? How his words continue to inspire us! How much they mark the whole New Testament! He was chosen to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Without a doubt, St. Paul's conversion story is extraordinary and his vocation gigantic. However, each of us, as we seek to follow the Lord in all seriousness, is called to fulfil our own vocation, which is unique and irreplaceable. Ananias' words to Paul also apply to us: We are called to know the will of the Lord, to see the Righteous One and hear the voice of His lips, to become His witnesses before men, proclaiming what we have seen and heard; that is, what the faith handed down to us teaches us. If we assimilate it deeply enough, this phrase has an enormous meaning. If we want to respond to our vocation, then we understand that we no longer belong to ourselves. In His love, a greater One has laid His hand upon us and called us into His service, as we see eminently in the story of St. Paul. *"Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more"* (Lk 12:48). These words call us to become aware of the great treasure that God has entrusted to us with our Catholic faith, and of the responsibility that derives from this.

Let us look at the Apostle to the Gentiles. From his conversion, where Jesus Himself called him to serve him instead of persecuting him out of blinded zeal, he answered the call. The Spirit of the Lord impelled him, and at the end of his life he could even affirm with certainty that he had fulfilled his mission and that God's reward now awaited him:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8).

This crown is also prepared for all of us, for *"all who have longed with love for his coming"*.

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-true-unity/>