# January 25th: Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

**Gospel text (*Mk* 16:15-18):** Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

***“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature”***

Fr. Josep GASSÓ i Lécera
*(Ripollet, Barcelona, Spain)*

Today, the Church commemorates the conversion of St. Paul, apostle. The short fragment of the Gospel according to St. Mark contains part of the address on the mission bestowed to the apostles by Jesus, resurrected. His exhortation to go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News includes the thesis that faith and baptism are necessary essentials for salvation: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16). Furthermore, Christ guarantees that preachers will be given the faculty to work out miracles or prodigies which will support and confirm their missionary preaching (cf. Mk 17:18). The mission is big —“Go into the whole world”—, but it will not be without the Lord's escort: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Today's collect, tells us: “O God, by the preaching of your apostle Paul you have caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world: Grant, we pray, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show ourselves thankful to you by following his holy teaching.” A gospel God has allowed us to know and that so many souls would desire to have: we have the responsibility to transmit this wonderful heritage to whatever extent we are able to.

St. Paul's conversion is a great event: from persecuting Jesus' followers he converted into a servant and defender of the cause of Christ. Quite often, perhaps, we have also been “persecutors”: and, as St. Paul, we need to convert from “persecutors” into servants and defenders of Jesus Christ.

With the Virgin Mary, we should realize the Almighty has also noticed us and has chosen us to share and carry out the priestly and redeeming mission of his divine Son: Regina apostolorum, Queen of the

apostles, pray for us!; Give us courage to bear witness of our Christian faith in this world of ours.

## *Thoughts on Today's Gospel*

- “Saul was led to Ananias; the devastating wolf is led to the sheep. But the Shepherd who leads everything from the top of heaven assures him: ‘Do not be afraid.’ Wonderful! The captive wolf is led to the sheep. The Lamb who dies for the sheep teaches him not to fear.” (St. Augustine)

- “Paul's conversion matured in his encounter with the Risen Christ; it was this encounter that radically changed his life. In this consists his and our conversion: in believing in Jesus dead and risen” (Benedict XVI)

- “Our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism: ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.’ (Mk 16: 15-16). Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that ‘we too might walk in newness of life.’ (Rm 6:4)” (Cathechism of the Catholic Church, No. 977)