

January 25th: Conversion of Paul, apostle

Gospel text (Mk 16,15-18): Jesus showed himself to the Eleven and said to them, «Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; the one who refuses to believe will be condemned. Signs like these will accompany those who have believed: in my Name they will cast out demons and speak new languages; they will pick up snakes and, if they drink anything poisonous, they will be unharmed. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed».

«Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation»

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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 and necessary essentials for salvation: «The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; the one who refuses to 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 out to the whole world»—, but it will not be without the Lord's escort: «And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age» (Mt 28:20).

Today's collect, tells us: «O God, who, by the preaching of your apostle Paul, has caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world: grant, we beseech you, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness to you for the same by following the holy doctrine which he taught». 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.