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The Conversion of St. Paul

adapted from *Welcome* by Mother Mary Loyola

Place Yourself in the Presence of God:

Think for just a few moments about the fact that God is everywhere. Not only does He see me now, but He is with me now, right here beside me.

Offer to God all Your Faculties:

My Lord, I give to Thee my intellect, my will, all my senses. All I have is from Thee and belongs to Thee.

Meditation:

Beginning:

1. Preparatory Prayer:

Come Holy Ghost or Hail Mary or a prayer of your choice may be said to invoke assistance.

2. Prelude:

a) Composition of Place:

Briefly set the scene. See Saul riding at great speed upon his horse. As he rides he's "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1) Suddenly, a bolt of light comes from the sky. The horse rears and Saul is thrown to the ground.

b) Ask:

Ask for the grace of perseverance in prayer, and the grace to know Our Lord more and more.

Middle:

A. Memory: (Imagination)

What do I see? See a number of men on horses, clad like Roman soldiers, riding down a dusty road. Saul rides on a fast and mighty steed. His face reveals his anger and his determination. From time to time he proclaims to his men his purpose. He is “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” He carries with him papers that will allow him to capture from Damascus any disciples of Christ and bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Suddenly, a great light flashes from the sky and shines all about the men. The horses rear. Saul is violently thrown from his horse.

Momentarily, he lies upon the ground stunned. Then he hears, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?”



Saul lifts his head in wonder. He can see nothing. He is blind. He asks, “Who art Thou, Lord?” The Voice answers, “I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.”

Saul is even more stunned now. Trembling and astonished he says, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

And the Lord said to him, “Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

B. Understanding:

What does this tell me? What a contrast between “Saul breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” and Paul who counted as

nothing perils of robbers, stripes, stoning, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, death itself for Jesus' sake. What a difference between the neophyte crying out in his ignorance: "Who art Thou, Lord?" and the Apostle exclaiming: "I know whom I have believed."

What had brought about this marvelous change? One thing – St. Paul had come to know Our Lord, to know Him intimately, as one friend knows another. And because he knew Him, he had come to love Him with so vehement an affection that he could say: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or danger, or the sword? I am sure that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord."

How had St. Paul learned to know Our Lord so well? He was not one of the Twelve, nor had he been among those who followed Him about during His life on earth, attracted by His wonderful works and by the charm of His presence and of His words. Paul had marvelous revelations, it is true. Still he had "to learn Christ," as he himself expressed it, much in the same way as we have to do by hearing about Him, by pondering what he heard, by remembering that all Our Blessed Savior had done and suffered was for him. "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me," was the thought that stirred all that was noble within him and urged his generous nature to return love for love.

C. Will:

What should I do? If we want to love Our Lord fervently, to make Him some return for all His love to us, we must try to know Him by making ourselves familiar with His life. We must notice His ways – His gentleness and compassion, His tenderness with sinners, with the sick, the sorrowing, the little children, His faithfulness to His friends, His patience, His loveliness.

We must try to bring home to ourselves, like St. Paul, that however poor and unimportant we may be in the eyes of others, however undeserving and sinful, we are – each of us, one by one, is dear and precious to the Heart of Our Blessed Lord, beyond what we are able to conceive.

For love of us, one by one, He taught and toiled and suffered. Had we been the only soul He came to save, He would have done for us singly what He has done for all. Each one of us, however lowly and unworthy, can say with the great Apostle: “He loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

When we come to realize this in some degree, our hearts will begin to warm. We shall find that we have found what we all long for – a true and faithful Friend, a Friend who will never tire of us, who will put up with our shortcomings and our selfishness and be always ready to listen to us and to help us. We shall begin to trust Him. We shall love to be with Him. We shall invite Him to come to us oftener and prepare our hearts better to receive Him.

And His visits will be more fruitful. Though the Sacraments work without our cooperation, their effects are stunted unless the soil is prepared. Our Lord could have worked a miracle in the desert to feed the hungry multitude without having bread to multiply. But His way is to help those who help themselves. He sent for the few little loaves that a boy in the crowd had brought, and He blessed and multiplied them. So it is with our dispositions. He increases whatever good He finds.

And why should we not do all we can to make Him welcome for His own sake, as well as for what He brings us! He is our best of Friends with Whom we are to spend our eternity; must we not be getting to know Him better that we may love Him more?

It was for us as well as for the sick of His own day that He showed Himself so tender and merciful. He knew that one day we would hear of the kind things He said and did, and He wanted to draw our hearts to Himself by these means. We must ponder and try to make real to ourselves, now one, now another of His miracles of mercy and to enter into the feelings of gratitude of those He healed.

We must remember we have the very same tender Lord with us, Who wants us to treat Him and to trust Him as if we had known and loved Him whilst He was here on earth.

End:

Colloquy:

O my Savior, I know Thou art the true Son of God. I know Thou didst come to Mary, lie in a manger, travel to and fro through the towns of Judea and by the sea-shore of Galilee. I know Thou didst sweat blood beneath the olive trees and hang upon the cross. All this I believe. And yet I may cry with Saul on the way to Damascus: "Who art Thou, Lord?" Teach me more and more about Thyself. Bring home to me, make real to me what I hold by my faith. How is it I can believe so much yet love so little? Oh, that I could love and trust Thee like those who knew Thee during Thy life on earth, whose hearts beat quickly at the thought of seeing Thy face, of hearing Thee calling them by their name! Make me know Thee better. Make Thyself more to my soul. Teach me how to speak to Thee, to unburden my heart to Thee, to trust to Thee its miseries, its weaknesses, its desire of better things. Make me know Thee more that I may love Thee more.

Resolution:

I will strive to know Thee more. That is, I will receive the Sacraments more frequently. I will pray more and read more about Thee.

Prayer:

Say a Hail Mary or an Our Father or a prayer of your choice.

Spiritual Bouquet:

I will take with me a spiritual bouquet, a little reminder to help me keep my resolution.

I will take with me the image of Saul, kneeling upon the dusty road, surrounded by light, looking up, and saying, “Who art Thou, Lord?”

