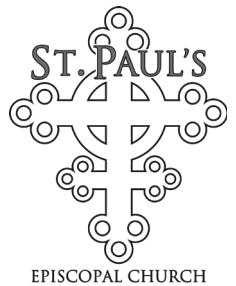




The Conversion of St. Paul (1601)
Caravaggio

Evening Prayer & Holy Eucharist January 26, 2022

The Conversion of the Apostle Paul
(transferred)



THE CONVERSION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (JANUARY 25)

On January 25 we remember how Saul (or Paul) of Tarsus, formerly an enemy and persecutor of the early Christian Church, was led by God's grace to become one of its chief spokesmen.

Our chief sources of information about the Apostle Paul are (1) several of his own letters, preserved for us in the New Testament, and (2) the account of him given by Luke in the book of Acts.

One naturally asks whether we can be sure that the letters attributed to Paul are in fact his. A partial answer is that a forger would run into difficulty. If he wrote a letter, say, to the church at Corinth during Paul's lifetime, and signed Paul's name, the Corinthians would naturally mention it the next time they sent a message to Paul, and Paul would naturally reply: "What are you talking about? I never wrote anything like that!" If a letter supposedly to Corinth were circulated after Paul's death, sooner or later a copy would reach Corinth, and the members of the church there would ask, "If Paul wrote this letter and sent it to us while he lived, how does it happen that no one here has ever heard of it?" Thus, it would be difficult to obtain credence for a forged letter to a congregation. This argument does not apply to a letter to an individual (such as Timothy or Titus). Moreover, it arguably does not apply to the Letter to the Ephesians. Although some ancient copies of this letter begin:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are [at Ephesus and] faithful in Christ Jesus:

other ancient copies read simply "also" instead of the bracketed words. Thus, it is widely supposed that the letter was written as a general form letter to many churches, with the name of the church to be filled in in each particular copy. This view is supported by the fact that the letter contains no personal greetings and makes no references to the past history of the congregation addressed. Now, a forger might write such a form letter, circulate it after Paul's death, and escape detection, since no particular congregation could say, "Since we did not hear of this letter before, Paul could not have written it." And accordingly, we find that it is precisely Ephesians and the Pastorals (the letters to Timothy and Titus) that are questioned by some scholars who acknowledge Paul's authorship of all the other letters claiming to be by him. (not counting the letter to the Hebrews, which is not signed.)

Our other source of information is the book of Acts, where Paul (at first called Saul) appears in 7:58-8:1; 9:1-30; 11:25-30; 12:25--28:31. Here we read how Paul at first opposed and persecuted the Church, how he had a vision of Christ and was converted, and devoted the rest of his life to spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Portions of this account include statements like “we then crossed over to Troas,” which are taken to mean that Luke was a companion of Paul for part of Paul’s journeys. Since these accounts, particularly those of the shipwreck on Paul’s last voyage, show every sign of being accurate eyewitness accounts (see the book *The Voyage and Shipwreck of Saint Paul*, by James Smith of Jordan Hill, FRS) and since a comparison of the style of various portions of the book of Acts makes it highly improbable that it is a scissors-and-paste job, with portions of one man’s work inserted into a story by someone else, many scholars consider the claim that Acts was written by a companion of Paul to be well established.

On the other hand, it is not always clear how the chronology of Luke’s account of the life of Paul is to be fitted with the autobiographical snippets we find in Paul’s own writings, and for this reason some scholars dispute the genuineness of the book of Acts.

Please stand at the sound of the bell

PREPARATION

Officiant ✕ The Lord almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end.
People **Amen.**

℣ Our help is in the name of the Lord.

℟ **Who made heaven and earth.**

The Phos Hilaron, *sung by the cantor*

*O gracious Light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!*

*Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.*

Celebrant Let us humbly confess our sins unto Almighty God.

Please kneel as you are able, silence may be kept

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father:**
We have sinned against thee,
through our own fault,
in thought, word, and deed,
and in those things which we have left undone.
For the sake of thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
forgive us all our offenses;
and grant that we may serve thee in newness of life,
to the glory of thy Name. Amen.

Officiant Almighty God have mercy on you, ✕ forgive you all your sins through
our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power
of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

All stand

WORD

℣ Your word is a lantern to my feet,
℟ and a light upon my path.

Please be seated

A Reading

Acts 26:9-21

‘Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death. By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities.

‘With this in mind, I was travelling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.” I asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The Lord answered, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

‘After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Silence is kept for a brief time

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 10:16-22

‘See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through

you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Silence is then kept for reflection and prayer.

PRAYER

Please stand

- ℣ Let my prayer come before you as incense,
℟ **the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**
- ℣ O Lord, I call to you, come to me quickly;
℟ **hear my voice when I cry to you.**
- ℣ My eyes are turned to you, Lord God;
℟ **in you I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.**

*All Let my prayer come before you as incense,
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

Please kneel as you are able, silence may be kept

- Officiant* O Lord, hear our prayer;
People **And let our cry come unto thee.**
- Officiant* Let us pray

A Collect for St. Paul the Apostle

O God, who by the preaching of your apostle Paul has 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; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Peace

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgments, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. *Amen.*

A Collect for the Aid against Perils

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Please stand

COMMUNION

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

The Celebrant continues

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. ¶ Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and

bring us to that heavenly country where, with St. Paul and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

Celebrant As our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

*All Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Fraction

A Fraction Anthem is sung by the Cantor.

Communion

SENDING

Celebrant Let us pray.

Please kneel as you are able, silence may be kept

The Post Communion Prayer, *Celebrant and People*

Loving God, we give you thanks for restoring us in your image and nourishing us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Now send us forth a people, forgiven, healed, renewed; that we may proclaim your love to the world and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.

A Collect for the evening

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know thee as thou art revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of thy love. **Amen.**

Please stand

℣ Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
℟ **For only in thee can we live in safety.**

℣ Peace be within your walls:
℟ **and quietness within your palaces.**

Officiant As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing

May Christ, the Son of God, be manifest in you, that your lives may be a light to the world; and the blessing of God Almighty, ☩ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

℣ May the divine help remain with us always.
℟ **And with our absent brethren. Amen.**