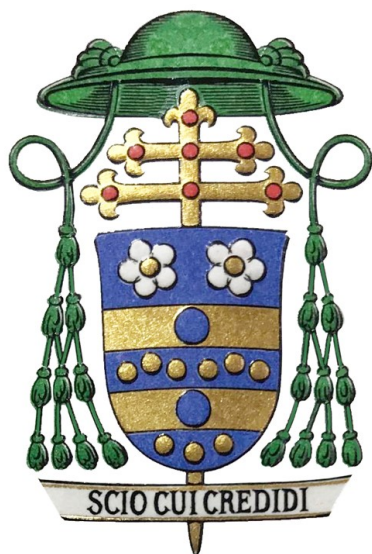


Abp. Viganò on Feast of St. Paul's Conversion: Pray for the
Conversion of Modern-Day "Sauls" in the Church



VAS ELECTIONIS EST MIHI ISTE
*Homily of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò
on the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle*

*Egregie Doctor Paule, mores instrue,
Et nostra tecum pectora in cœlum trahe;
Velata dum meridiem cernat fides,
Et solis instar sola regnet caritas.*

O distinguished Doctor Paul, teach the laws
and draw our spirits with you to heaven,
until the obscured Faith is like noonday
and Charity alone reigns like the sun.

The Conversion of Saint Paul is a conquest of Saint Stephen, and it is no coincidence that the Divine Liturgy places this feast a few days after that of the Protomartyr, whom the Jew Saul, loyal to the Old Law and faithful executor of the will of the High Priests, saw martyred before his eyes and perhaps he himself martyred, believing that he was performing an action in conformity with the precepts observed by every orthodox Jew. Abbot Guéranger comments: *To complete the court of our great King, it was right that the two powerful pillars of the Church, the Apostle of the Jews and the Apostle of the Gentiles, should be raised on either side of the manger: Peter with the keys and Paul with the sword. Thus Saul,*

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from being an observant Jew and persecutor of Christians, becomes Paul, conqueror of the pagans to the Gospel.

Today the power of Christ overthrows His enemy, and His mercy raises him up, making him a champion of the Faith and the companion of the Prince of the Apostles, with whom he will shed his blood in Rome: *O Roma felix, quæ duorum Principum es consecrata glorioso sanguine*, we sing in the hymn *Decora lux*. O Happy Rome, consecrated by the glorious blood of the two Princes! A blood that is glorious because from it, poured out for love of Christ, comes not death but life, not defeat but victory, not the ignominy of torture but the glory of the palm of martyrdom.

Back when the Shepherds obeyed God and did not pursue the deceptions of this world, from the [Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter in Rome](#) to the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Octave of Prayer for the conversion of non-Catholics, schismatics, heretics and pagans was held. The new church, following the lines of Vatican II, has denied its mission and seeks to hide what separates us from sects and idolaters, emphasizing what they believe unites us. And that moment of prayer became the "Week for Christian Unity," putting the aims of an unhealthy ecumenism before the supernatural mission of preaching the true Faith. I therefore invite you to pray for the clerics and prelates who persecute good Catholics, and for those like Saul who believe that they are keeping the precepts of the law while they are in error. Let us ask the Lord to show Himself to them and to convert them, just as the Apostle to the Gentiles was converted.

Do not be surprised by this parallel: the veil of the temple that was torn in two at the moment of the Savior's death on the Cross put an end to the Old Covenant, making the Church of Christ the new Israel, and the baptized the new chosen people. This new and eternal Covenant, sealed in the Blood of the Lamb of which the sacrifices of the Temple were figures, welcomed many sons of the Synagogue, enlightened by messianic prophecies and confirmed by the miracles of the Lord: among them there were many who, like Saul, obeyed the Law until they were touched by the Grace that showed them the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Jesus Christ. And while the blindness of perfidy did not allow the Light that had come into the world to be seen and rejected it; while the Sanhedrin conspired with Pilate in fear of having their power compromised and hid from the simple truths kept in the scrolls of Isaiah and the holy Prophets; while Saul tried in all the synagogues to force Christians with threats to blaspheme (Acts 26:11), that is, to deny the divinity of Christ and His coming as the promised Messiah, the great miracle of conversion was prepared: instantaneous, immediate, and lightning quick, like all things concerning God.

The path of conversion is sometimes arduous and long, fraught with difficulties and falls; but conversion in itself takes place with the strength and power of which the Lord is

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capable, when he touches us with the light of Truth and with the fire of Charity. *Who are You, Lord?* asks Saul, unseated from his horse. *I am Jesus, Whom you persecute* (Acts 9:5). In the dazzling light in which the voice of Christ resounds, one of the most feared inquisitors of the Temple recognizes the miracle, understands its divine Maker, addresses Him as "Lord," and obeys the order to go to Damascus. He remains dazzled and blind for three days, and for three days he fasts, in mystical preparation for the *epiphany* of Christ.

By another miracle, Ananias is instructed to go and heal Saul of Tarsus, and he is amazed because the Jew *has permission from the high priests to arrest all those who call on your name* (Acts 9:14). And the Lord answers him: *Go, for he is for Me a chosen instrument to bear My Name before the peoples, kings, and the children of Israel; and I will show him how much he must suffer for My Name* (Acts 9:15-16). Going to Saul, Ananias lays his hands on him and heals him, making the veil of blindness fall from his eyes, a symbol of the darkening of the sight of the soul. Filled with the Holy Spirit, *Saul was immediately baptized* (Acts 9:18), taking the name Paul.

Even today, a Sanhedrin of followers of Vatican II sends its ministers to synagogues to persecute traditional Catholics, in order to punish them and take them as prisoners to the observance of the reformed rites. Even today, there are zealous and terrible Sauls who seek out the faithful to "force them to blaspheme," to deny the teaching of Christ, and to obey the High Priests and scribes of the people. Many of them believe they are just and respect the law. But the power of God, which overthrows and brings down the proud, wants to touch the soul of these Sauls, just as it did with the first Saul. It is for these Sauls, dear faithful, that I invite you to pray: that the Lord may show His power in unseating them from their rock-like certainties, to blind them in their pride; and that He may use His mercy toward them in order to lift them up, restore their spiritual sight, fill them with the Holy Spirit, and make them His apostles.

Let us pray that the prelates and priests who today obey the Roman Sanhedrin, which does not want to recognize Christ the King while paying homage to Caesar, may be enlightened by the Grace of the Lord. Let us pray that they may return to the synagogues like Paul to proclaim Jesus as *Son of God* (Acts 9:20), to show that Jesus is the *Christ* (Acts 9:22), to preach that the Sacrifice of the new and eternal Covenant is renewed on the altar of those who up until today have persecuted it. Let us pray it may also be said of that that Monsignor, that Bishop, that Cardinal: *But is this not the one who raged in Jerusalem against those who invoke this name and had come here precisely to lead them in chains to the high priests?* (Acts 9:21).

If we know how to bear witness to our faith in the Lord and to our fidelity to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the beating heart and soul of our most holy religion, we will

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be able to do with these souls touched by Grace what the disciples did in Damascus: speak to them about Christ and invite them to stay with us *to grow and walk in the fear of the Lord* (Acts 9:31). Perhaps that Prelate who came to force us to accept the reformed rites will want to celebrate the traditional Holy Mass, discovering how much his priesthood is confirmed and nourished by the divine Liturgy, how much his soul as a Levite finds perfect fulfillment in repeating the words of the Savior who sacrifices Himself on the altar, as once and for all He sacrificed Himself on the Cross. Perhaps that Bishop who arrived with combative intent will realize that he is persecuting Christ, and will want to become His apostle and disciple, after having been His persecutor by order of the Sanhedrin.

And he will understand — as we have understood, by God's grace and despite our unworthiness — *how much he will have to suffer for My Name*.

This is our most sincere wish; this is our prayer; this is the reason for our witness.

And so may it be.

+Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

25 January 2023
In Conversione Sancti Pauli Apostoli