

“He is Risen!”

Acts Bible Study

St. Peter’s Catholic Church

Week Four: Paul’s Conversion

- **Welcome**

For the small groups meeting over the internet, it’s good to start off with a few minutes checking in and greeting each other.

- **Begin with a prayer**

In your own words, you can thank God for this opportunity to read his Word, and ask him to guide our reflection on Holy Scripture and our discussion together.

- **Scripture to read and discuss: Acts 9:1-22**

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay [his] hands on him, that he may regain his sight.” But Ananias replied, “Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, “Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit.” Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength.

He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. All who heard him were astounded and said, “Is not this the man who in Jerusalem ravaged those who call upon this name, and came here expressly to take them back in chains to the chief priests?” But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded [the] Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this is the Messiah.

- **Discussion / Reflection:**

(Please note, these are meant as a tool to start fruitful discussion. In a small group with great participation you may not get to all the questions. Discussion time should be about 30 minutes in length.)

- What do you think of as “the Way” in verse 2?
- Recount some of the events of the conversion of Saul (Saint Paul).
- What kind of reputation did Saul have that leaves Ananias fearful to go encounter him? How is he encouraged to overcome or face his fear?
- Why do you think Jesus asks in verse 4, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”
- What experiences did Saul have in Damascus? What did this do for him?
- Saul regains his eyesight through the prayer of Ananias. He receives new spiritual through Baptism and by learning from the Christians of Damascus. On your journey of faith, are there experiences or ways in which God has blessed you with new spiritual insight?
- Some people have very dramatic conversions like Saul, but often conversions happen slowly or have multiple steps to them. For those of us who grew up Catholic, we can have times of maturing in which we choose to make the Catholic faith our own, for example, or when we turn away from a life of sin. How have you experienced conversion in your own life?

- **For the week:**

Prayerfully read the rest of chapter 9 of Acts, along with chapters 10 and 11. Consider:

- How does God begin to work through Paul? (Saul)
- How does God begin to show Peter that the gift of salvation is meant for all peoples, not just those of Jewish descent?

Why not spend time in daily prayer this week, building a new habit or increase one that has already started, developing it further? Quiet yourself, ask for the Lord to be present with you, talk to the Lord, listen in silence, and be thankful!

- **Close with a prayer**

In small group, were there any intentions? This would be a good time to lift up those intentions and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we think consider our own testimonies and how we share our conversion story with others.

Extra Note from Father Andrew:

In Acts 9, Jesus shows how he is united with his body, the Church, when he asks, “Why are you persecuting *me*?” instead of “my Church” or “my people?” Jesus truly works in and through his Church. It is fascinating to see the beginning of Saint Paul’s ministry, and how he was never a “lone ranger” operating on his own. Jesus called him by name and brought him to be part of the family of faith. Through the Church he was baptized, instructed, and sent forth: first by the local “parish” in Damascus and then by the apostles themselves in Jerusalem!