

# St. Paul

## Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Isaiah 45:18-25

Second Lesson: 2 Cor 12:1-9

## Homily

The Prayer Book calls this the Feast of St. Paul.  
 The older name for the day is  
 The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle,  
 as there has long been a feast also of his martyrdom.  
 In today's Communion Service  
 we hear the story of his encounter with Jesus  
 as he was riding on the Damascus Road  
 with a mission to destroy this new faith,  
 a task he'd already been pursuing with vigor.  
 The Lord appeared to him,  
 called him to Himself,  
 and commissioned him as Apostle to the gentiles.

This man Saul, accepted the Savior and the call,  
 began using his Greek Name, Paul,  
 and carried the Gospel to the wider Roman culture,  
 and thus it is that we Gentiles came to Christ.  
 Paul walked close with God,  
 received divine inspiration to write  
 what became over half the New Testament,

worked many miracles,  
 and experienced the divine presence.

We won't dwell on his adventures this morning,  
 though they were many and spectacular,  
 but we will follow these lessons  
 and think of his attitude and the faith he held.

*"I knew such a man",* he says,  
 and it is generally accepted that he was actually  
 speaking of himself,

*"How that he was caught up into paradise,  
 and heard unspeakable words,  
 which it is not lawful for a man to utter."*

What a wonderful experience it is  
 that these few words express,  
 to step into the presence of God,  
 to walk the golden streets,  
 to look upon His Face,  
 to hear His Voice.  
 What glory!  
 Maybe some of us  
 have tasted a little of these things.  
 The days of miracles and visions have not passed.  
 God is still very near and very active among us.  
 Christian mysticism is a very real thing  
 Most of us will have no such testimony to give,

and we may feel something is lacking,  
but listen to St. Paul

*“Of such an one will I glory: “*

He’ll testify with joy that God does appear  
to His people,  
that His Presence is real among us,  
that God is not out of reach, but he goes on:

*“yet of myself I will not glory,  
but in mine infirmities.”*

The fact that God reveals Himself  
is to be celebrated,  
but the person that meets Him in this way  
has nothing to brag about.

Who is Paul?  
Who is any Christian,  
whether recognized saint or obscure pew-sitter

We are sinners saved by grace.  
*“All have sinned and come short of the glory of  
God”*

said St. Paul on another occasion,  
and he included himself in that.  
We are weak in so many ways,  
and the mightiest of exploits for God  
doesn’t change that one whit.

St. Paul went on, famously,  
to write of a “thorn in the flesh”.  
There’s been endless debate  
as to what that might have been:  
a physical infirmity?  
an unattractive appearance?  
some sort of besetting temptation?  
a difficult person always plaguing him?  
All these things have been mentioned,  
but does it really matter?

What does matter  
is that we, with all our weakness  
belong to Him.  
We have been bought and paid for  
with the precious Blood of Jesus.

St. Paul prayed with fervor,  
three times, he says,  
for this “thorn” to be taken away,  
and it was not,  
but rather he heard His voice:

*“My grace is sufficient for thee.”*

Everywhere you look today,  
especially in the field of religion,  
you see strong leaders.  
There are well-known television evangelists.

There are pastors of huge “megachurches”  
 There are the writers  
 of phenomenally successful books,  
 and there are the leaders of cult after cult.  
 This is to say nothing of impressive political leaders  
 in every nation, including our own,  
 who are thought to have all the answers,  
 but St. Paul knew what Isaiah knew,  
 what we heard in the First Lesson today:

*“Look unto me, and be ye saved,  
 all the ends of the earth:  
 or I am God, and there is none else.  
 I have sworn by myself,  
 the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,  
 and shall not return,  
 That unto me every knee shall bow,  
 every tongue shall swear.*

What matters is not my strength  
 It’s not my goodness,  
 nor my wisdom,  
 nor my experience.

It’s not how pious I am,  
 what transports of ecstasy I can report,  
 how successfully I can preach or write or sing.  
 No, none of that really matters.  
 What matters is Christ in me,

the grace of God in accepting such a sinner as I,  
 the grace of God in sanctifying me over time,  
 the grace of God in leading me,  
 patiently and surely,  
 though I stumble and fail again and again,  
 leading me, one day, to His Heaven.  
 As Isaiah continues:

*“Surely, shall one say,  
 in the LORD have I righteousness and strength:  
 even to him shall men come; “*

Let us pray.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
 Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
 Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
 Christ to comfort and restore me,  
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
 Christ in hearst of all that love me,  
 Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.  
 Praise to the Lord of my salvation.  
 Salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.

# **St. Paul**

## **Evening Prayer**

**First Lesson: Jer 1:4-10**

**Second Lesson: Acts 26:1-23**

## **Homily to be written**