

**HOMILY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL  
DURING THE MASS  
IN THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

The first reading of this Vigil of the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul invites us to reflect on the experience of the first encounter of the Apostle of the Gentiles with Christ. Paul himself tells us about this event in the discourse that we find in the Acts of the Apostles: «*While I was traveling and approaching Damascus, around noon, suddenly a great light from heaven flashed around me...*» (Acts 22:6). Then the Lord enters into dialogue with him, calls him to follow him and introduces him to a new life.

The encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus radically transforms Paul's life. From that moment on, the meaning of his existence will no longer be found in relying on his own strength to scrupulously observe the Law, but in adhering with all his heart to the gratuitous and unmerited love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ crucified and risen. This is the light that shines in his life and frees him from the darkness of pride, hatred and arrogance, making him a "new creature".

After this experience, Paul effectively lives the same mandate given by Jesus to his disciples: «*Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature*» (Mk 16:15-18). As our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, said, Paul was lacking the nations, but the nations were not lacking Paul: he became an instrument of the Gospel for the nations, even at the cost of facing the greatest suffering.

In his missionary life, St. Paul concretely realizes what Jesus says in the Gospel we have heard, namely that «*there will be signs that will accompany those who believe*». In fact, Paul with his words and his actions will truly be a sign of love, of brotherhood, of hope, of mercy, of reconciliation in his relationship with every person and with the various communities of his time.

A life of faith accompanied by concrete signs is what characterizes Paul's mission and should also be what distinguishes our lives as Christians. Among the signs already mentioned, which we too are called to assume in the following of Jesus, there are very many important attitudes, and among them is being witnesses of communion and unity. Let us remember that God's grace prompted the Apostle Paul immediately to seek communion with other Christians, first in Damascus and then in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:19. 26-27).

We are in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a time that invites us to see to what extent we bear witness to the search for unity and communion. In particular, this year's "Week for Unity" has as its theme "Try to be truly just", inspired by verses 18-20 of Chapter 16 of Deuteronomy. The reflection proposed for this year helps us to understand that unity and justice are two realities that enrich our understanding of ecumenical communion and

they become an essential means of building a peaceful and spiritually prosperous society. In fact, rediscovering unity also means overcoming the injustice of division.

Therefore, it is important to move from the theoretical level of the discourse on unity and justice to the practical and concrete commitment, with actions of unity and justice in our personal lives and in the lives of our Christian and religious communities. Unity that also leads us to deal, together and in the light of the Gospel, with the different situations of injustice present in our society, which generate the “culture of death”.

In addition to seeking unity among ourselves, we, members of the Pauline Family, can also be signs of unity and justice for our brothers and sisters of the different Christian communities, who also believe in Jesus as the power that forgives, heals, protects and saves. Through our apostolates, with the same ardour as that of the Apostle Paul, we can collaborate to give a concrete form to this journey, to be true builders of the culture of the encounter, so much emphasized by Pope Francis.

Amen!

Rome, Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls  
24 January 2019

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