

# BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM



Divine charity is the strength that transforms the life of Saul of Tarsus and makes him the Apostle to the Gentiles. Writing to the Christians at Corinth, St Paul confesses that God's grace worked the extraordinary event of conversion in him: **"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain"** (I Cor 15: 10).

On the one hand, he feels the weight of having hindered the spread of Christ's message; but on the other, he lives in the joy of having met the Risen Lord and having been enlightened and transformed by his light. He keeps a constant memory of that life-changing event, an event so important for the entire Church that in the Acts of the Apostles reference is made to it three times (cf. Acts 9: 3-9; 22: 6-11; 26: 12-18).

On the road to Damascus, Saul hears the disturbing question: **"Why do you persecute me?"**. Falling to the ground and interiorly troubled, he asked: **"Who are you, Lord?"**, receiving that answer which is the basis of his conversion: **"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"** (Acts 9: 4-5). Paul understood in an instant what he would later express in his writings: that the Church forms a single body of which Christ is the Head. And so, from a persecutor of Christians he became the Apostle to the Gentiles.

*Benedict XVI*