

St Paul's conversion

St Paul's conversion offers us the model and indicates to us the way towards full unity. Unity, in fact, requires conversion: from division to communion, from wounded unity to one that is healed and full.

This conversion is a gift of the Risen Christ as it happened for St Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15: 10). The same Lord who called Saul on the road to Damascus addresses the members of his Church which is one and holy and calling each one by name asks: why have you divided me? Why have you wounded the unity of my body?

Conversion implies two dimensions.

In the first step one knows and recognizes one's faults in the light of Christ, and this recognition becomes sorrow and contrition, the desire for a new beginning.

In the second step one recognizes that this new journey cannot come from oneself. It consists in letting oneself be conquered by Christ. As St Paul says: "I am racing to grasp the prize if possible, since I have been grasped by Christ [Jesus]" (Phil 3: 12). Conversion demands our "yes", my "racing"; ultimately it is not my action, but a gift in letting myself be formed by Christ. It is death and resurrection.

Therefore St Paul does not say: "I am converted", but he says "I died" (Gal 2: 19), I am a new creature. Actually, St Paul's conversion was not a passage from immorality to morality his was a high morality from a mistaken faith to a correct faith his faith was true, even if incomplete but rather it was a state of being conquered by Christ's love. It was the renunciation of his own perfection, the humility of the one who places himself without reserve at the service of Christ for the brethren. And only in this renunciation of ourselves, in this conformity with Christ can we be united also among ourselves, do we become "one" in Christ.

It is communion with the Risen Christ that gives us unity.

Benedetto XVI

