

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 25th 2013

Several things occur to me about Paul's words. First of all I think it ironic that Paul had to endure enmity from both sides, the Christians and the Jews. At the time of his conversion he had to convince the Christians that his conversion was genuine and that he was one of them. Now he encounters the enmity of the Jews who see him as a traitor to their cause by his conversion to Christianity. As I read Paul's words I am impressed by his courage and determination. He had just been beaten and it must have taken all his strength to stand up to those who minutes before had been beating him. It also must have taken great courage to speak to them at all since they were very hostile to him. After he concluded his words and was led off, the crowd remained hostile to Paul. Some in the crowd had probably been among those who stoned St. Stephen. Although he did not convince them, Paul tried very hard to change the hostility directed toward him. He gives a very honest and precise description of what happened to him in his conversion experience. I get the feeling that Paul wanted to know if any of his hearers would have done differently if they had had the encounter with Jesus that he did.

The Conversion of St. Paul is an outstanding example of the mysterious way that God sometimes works. Paul had an encounter with Jesus that was unlike that had by any of the other apostles. He went very quickly from being an implacable foe of the Christians to being one of their great champions and an outstanding apostle. The feast of Paul's conversion is a major feast celebrated by the Church throughout the world. It reminds us of the great work done by St. Paul. And this feast calls upon all of us Christians to try and imitate the virtues and the example of this great apostle.

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