

Title: St Paul's Conversion



Prayer to St Julie Billiart

Saint Julie, through your great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you were miraculously cured and favoured by many graces.

By your powerful intercession, obtain for us above all, a great trust in God in all the difficulties of life, the strength to accomplish in all things the adorable will of God, and the special grace we now ardently ask of you.

"We must have courage in the times we live in. Great souls are needed, souls having the interest of God at heart"

St Julie Billiart

Prayers

Dear Lord, Paul 'saw the light' on the road to Damascus, help us all to see the important things more clearly so that we can act in a way that makes a difference.

Amen

Scripture

Acts 22: 3 -16

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up here in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel. I received strict instruction in the Law of our ancestors and was just as dedicated to God as are all of you who are here today. I persecuted to the death the people who followed this Way. I arrested men and women and threw them into prison. The High Priest and the whole Council can prove that I am telling the truth. I received from them letters written to fellow Jews in Damascus, so I went there to arrest these people and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem to be punished.

"As I was travelling and coming near Damascus, about midday a bright light from the sky flashed suddenly around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute,' he said to me. The men with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. I asked, 'What shall I do, Lord?' and the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that God has determined for you to do.' I was blind because of the bright light, and so my companions took me by the hand and led me into Damascus.

"In that city was a man named Ananias, a religious man who obeyed our Law and was highly respected by all the Jews living there. He came to me, stood by me, and said, 'Brother Saul, see again!' At that very moment I saw again and looked at him. He said, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see his righteous Servant, and to hear him speaking with his own voice. For you will be a witness for him to tell everyone what you have seen and heard. And now, why wait any longer? Get up and be baptised and have your sins washed away by praying to him.'

Pray For:

- Christians the world over - for the ability to focus on our similarities.
- for peace in our hearts, homes and communities, and the world over.
- people who need the courage to start again.
- the courage to give people a second chance.
- the people of Syria (the country of Saul's encounter in Damascus)

Focus on one each day



Reflect: Instead of the usual Sunday Gospel reading this scripture passage is taken from this coming Saturday's Mass— the Feast of Saint - Paul—and his conversion. This is a really significant celebration for us as a community because it marks the time when this man, who was known as Saul, had an encounter with Christ that made him change his ways. He put his past behind him, took on a new name (Paul) and started a new way of living. Read the passage - his own words tell us "I persecuted to the death the people who followed this way". Saul was a violent and menacing man towards Christians and yet he was chosen to be such a special, significant figure in Christianity. This Feast reminds us all that it's never too late with God, he calls us all, whatever our past, to start again with him.

- How does this story connect with you?
- Which areas of your life need to change? How?

Prayer in action this week:

- Turn a negative situation into a positive one.
- Turn your back on a bad habit.
- Try to start again with someone who hurt you.
- See the good in people.
- Make a new start

Saul was blinded by a light as he walked along the road to Damascus.

From then on he saw things differently, he changed. He became known as Paul and decided to walk a different path.

Think of all the different ways we talk about people changing...

Conversion: Saw the light

Turned over a new leaf

Changed direction

Took a different path

Started again

Can you think of any more? Which word or phrase is the one that speaks the most to you? Do any of them apply to you and your life right now?

Dear Lord, you met Paul as he travelled along the road to Damascus, meet me as I travel through this day.

It was by meeting you that Paul had the courage to let go of his past and begin a new way of life - I'd like to do that Lord!

Help me to let go of the things that have been holding me back so that I can begin anew, with you, today!

Amen

God our Father,

We are thankful for the example and inspiration of Saint Paul,

Paul's story gives us all hope because we know that it is never too late to make a difference, we know that you will never turn your back on any of us.

You know better than anyone what is going on in my life at the moment and I ask you to be with me through it all, especially..... (here we pause in silence to allow everyone to think about a situation that is specific to them, their family or friends, things they are struggling with etc...)

Father, bless each of us here today, and help us to know your presence. **Amen**

Lord, I am not perfect just as Saul wasn't perfect.

By choosing Saul and giving him a new name and a new start you show us that no-one is outside of your love. I am sorry for hurt I have caused and damage done.

Give me the courage to admit past mistakes and help me to start afresh - today.

Amen

Lord, sometimes we wander off track in our lives, we stray from the path that we should follow. Help us to recognise your light in our lives as a beacon to help us get back on track. Just as Paul saw your light and knew he had to change, help us to be brave enough to know what needs to change in our lives. We ask this in your name.

Amen

Loving God,

Help us to know and love who we truly are.

As we grow and change, be with us, especially when things feel strange and different.

Help us, wherever we can, to walk in the footsteps of your son Jesus Christ.

Amen

Saint Paul turned his back on his old way of life - he turned to you and was able to face all life's troubles knowing you were by his side.

Give us that same confidence Lord.

Amen