

SAINTS ALIVE! JANUARY 25: CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL



An ardent persecutor of the followers of Jesus Christ, Saint Paul eventually converted to Christianity and became its biggest cheerleader. The indefatigable Paul travelled the Middle East proclaiming the good news, just as Jesus instructs: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

Two-thousand years ago, St. Paul was a missionary proclaiming the good news. Today we are each called to proclaim the good news.

As a reminder of our calling, the Catholic Church has begun a recommitment for all followers of Christ to, among other goals, be witnesses to the ends of the earth, *proclaiming the good news to all people everywhere*, starting with those in our own Church. This recommitment – the New Evangelization – calls each of us to go forth to proclaim the Gospel.

A couple of nights ago we celebrated a New Year and the promise it holds for us. The Church is also celebrating the Year of Faith during which faith is to be "professed, celebrated, lived and prayed" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, no. 9).

What does living one's faith look like? Our Catholic faith is expressed in the Church's three-fold responsibility of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and *exercising the ministry of charity*, (duties that are inseparable) (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 25).

Building upon this fundamental tenet of our Catholic faith, Pope Benedict writes that "*the Year of Faith will also be a good opportunity to intensify the witness of charity*. As Saint Paul reminds us: 'So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (charity)' (1 Cor 13:13). With even stronger words – which have always placed Christians under obligation – Saint James said: 'Faith without charity bears no fruit'" (*Porta Fidei*, no. 14).

Again, each of us is called to proclaim the good news, to evangelize. And the most effective form of evangelization is a Christian life lived with charity and faith (USCCB, *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*). Why? Because "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*The New Evangelization*, no. 158, quoting Pope Paul VI).

Yes, the most effective form of evangelization is not social media but a modeled life of charity and faith.

"In the new evangelization, the love shown to those in spiritual and material need, which is expressed in works of fellowship, solidarity and assistance, speaks louder than words" (*The New Evangelization*, no. 124).

We can learn many lessons from Saint Paul's words, his actions and his conversion. Today let us focus on his commitment to proclaiming the good news. We can follow Paul's example by proclaiming the good news not with words but through action. We can be witnesses to our faith by our charity – fellowship, solidarity and assistance – to those in need because "the greatest of these is love (charity)" (1 Cor 13:13).



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