

**HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL AT THE WORLD
YOUTH DAY IN PANAMA ON JANUARY 25, 2019**

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Today we celebrate the conversion of St. Paul. What an extraordinary turn of event. Saul had murder in his heart for Christians. Yet by the time he arrived in Damascus, he was all set to become one of the boldest and most zealous Christians the world has known.

What caused such a transformation? It was a dramatic encounter with the risen Lord, Jesus. As Saul was on the road towards Damascus, the glory of the Lord flashed about him like a blinding light and struck him to the ground. Then Jesus personally spoke to Saul in such a way that he would never be the same again. The experience was so powerful that Saul was temporarily blinded and needed the prophetic ministry of a Christian named Ananias to restore his sight.

If Jesus can so radically change an enemy and persecutor of the Christians as vehement as Saul, think of what he can do with us; people who are already members of the His body washed clean in the waters of baptism. God wants to make us so fully alive in his Spirit. He wants to fill us with his life so we would manifest naturally the joy of following him personally and demonstrate to others the vitality of His life. Each of us is capable of knowing Jesus just as deeply as Paul did; and experience his life and his power.

The key to receiving more of the Lord and the power of his life are to hunger for him and simply ask for more. Many like Saul have been radically transformed and empowered for some role of service as part of the mission of the body of Christ. This power of the risen Lord is available to each of us. Let us ask him, even beg him, to touch us afresh so that we will be greatly changed. Jesus can do it. Mary experienced the transformative power of the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation. Like her, may we always be open to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and always say, "*Ecce ancilla Domini, Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" (I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word – cf. Luke 1:38)