



BEING WITH GOD

January 25, 2006 is the celebration of the Conversion of St. Paul. He killed many followers of Christ before he became an Apostle of Christ. His conversion while he was on his way to Damascus is one of the most touching miracles in the history of the early Church. It shows us how faith comes from grace and from one's free cooperation. The doctrine on the Mystical Body of Christ receives proof and a clear illustration when Christ says, "Saul, Saul (his name before becoming Paul), why do you persecute me?" We should realize that the best way to hasten the unity of all Christians is to foster our own daily personal conversion.

Personal conversion means "Being with God". To return to communion with God after having lost it through sin is a process born of the grace of God who is rich in mercy and solicitous for the salvation of men. One must ask for this precious gift for oneself and for others.

The movement of return to God, called conversion and repentance, entails sorrow for and abhorrence of sins committed, and the firm purpose of sinning no more in the future.

Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion.

It is called the sacrament of conversion because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father⁵ from whom one has strayed by sin.

Then it is called the sacrament of Penance, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.

Conversion touches the past and the future and is nourished by hope in God's mercy.

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