

HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH METCALFE, ON.

JANUARY 23, 2022

Feast of the Conversion Of St. Paul

Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we remember Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, we acknowledge that our parish and all the roads that lead to it lie on the unceded territory of the Ashinabee Algonquin peoples.

People: **May we walk together in trust and harmony and in the spirit of true reconciliation.**

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the ministry of the Apostle Paul and for the many truths you saw fit to reveal to us through his ministry. May we like Paul have receptive heart and deep desires to pray fervently, preach enthusiastically and proclaim Jesus as Messiah, the Saviour of the world, the Son of Man and the Son of God. We pray this in his blessed and sacred name. Amen

Fr. Michael: And now with all the saints in heaven and on earth, together we pray,

People: **Glory to God in the highest,**

and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Fr. Michael: Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit and make us worthy of your call; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Fr. Michael: Almighty God, by the preaching of your servant Paul you caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world and in the lives of all the saints, remembering especially today (in addition to Paul) Sts. Titus and Timothy. May we who celebrate Paul's wondrous conversion, bear witness to your truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

Reader: A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (9:1-22) Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there

who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing.

So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name?"

And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

People: **Father, we thank you for Saul of Tarsus who was a man who recognized who Christ truly was, we pray that if we have any false perceptions of who You are or if we are going down the wrong path in our faith, that you help us to see where we are going wrong and give us a more intimate and truer vision so that**

**we might worship you in all spirit and truth and this we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen**

Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—

People: **so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.**

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

People: **May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with
equity**

and guide the nations of the earth.

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

People: **The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.**

May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Reader: A Reading from Paul's Letter to the church in Galatia (Galatians 1:11-24) I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they praised God because of me.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

People: **Lord, through us and the lives we lead and the words we speak and the things we do bring others to your gentle arms. May we shine as your light of**

hope and joy in the heart of all the darkness which surrounds us today and may we always see the Light who is your Son Jesus. Amen

Holy Gospel

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the blessed St. Luke (Luke 4:14-21)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole

countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Fr. Michael: The Gospel of Christ.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

CONVERSION OF PAUL SERMON

I spent a lot of time this week thinking about the story which Meredith just shared with us from The Book of Acts – the narrative of Saul: of how he began as one trying to out-Pharisee the Pharisees in his piety for the faith; of his attempts to out-do the Sadducees in his zeal for the Law; of his devotion to the hunting down and destruction of all who opposed the preeminence of Judaism in the land; of how he set out for the city of Damascus with letters from the Temple, giving him authority in the name of the Sanhedrin to bring back to Jerusalem all known as “Followers of the Way” for heresy hearings; of how he was thrown from his horse and blinded by a searing light as he heard, “Saul Saul...why are you persecuting me?”; of his being led to Ananias on Straight Street in Damascus and of Ananias’ struggle with God’s call that he minister to the one who had come seeking to destroy him and all those who followed The Christos ; of the restoration of sight and the renaming of the enemy of Christ to become an amicus dei – once Saul, now Paul, friend of God . Quite the story from which to choose just one element to focus on.

Rather than belabour the theology of it all, I decided to pull a Pope John Paul 1 on you today!

Before being elevated to the papal throne and choosing the name John Paul 1, Albino Luciani was the Patriarch of Venice known for his imaginative sermons, his pastoral care of everyone in Venice and for letters which he wrote to prominent persons – people like Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Goethe, St. Teresa of Avila, King David, Jesus and Pinocchio. Through his “correspondence” with all these folk (all who were either dead or fictional), Luciani was able to reach more people than even the greatest sermons he could write ever would. When I first heard of his book *Illustrisimi* and read these letters, I was overwhelmed by this as a teaching tool and began doing the same but only for an audience of one ME! : I have written to a variety of persons and characters and it is amazing how merely addressing someone like my favourite figure in literature, Eeyore, can become such an entry point into reflection which otherwise I would have had great difficulty in either imagining or expressing. So, I decided this week to get in touch with Paul, you know St. Paul and this is what I wrote to him:

My dear Paul or Saul or Paul-Saul or Saul-Paul (whatever do I call you now?)

Sometimes, things can be very, very, very scary;

sometimes things happen that can be very, very, very trying

and we can't seem to get our heads around them,

and fog sits and finger paints against the canvas of our lives.

Sometimes, all the blessed assurances and rock-bottomed certainties and for sures

and all the no doubts and the of courses

end up like chocolate-swirl ice cream melting in the bottom of a bowl.

What I once knew,

what once was for me a certainty, verifiable or feel able

often becomes an unsureable

and I wander in search of justification

for what I say and do and feel and act.

My faith journey sometimes is like that, my friend -

very very very scary and trying,

as graspable as dust in a sunbeam,

and I don't know where to turn or how to turn or why to turn or if to turn,

or whether I should just sit still, sit tight and wait...

or bounce around Tigger-like hoping to stomp whatever is going bump in the night of my soul

or hiding under my bed or lurking in the closet

(whatever is shadowing me)

and make it disappear

not realizing that the more I provoke it,
the smaller it becomes as it recedes from my fear
until it seems to have “poofed” and “be gone-d”,
just floating out there, waiting, waiting, biding its time
until I forget about it
and then IT leaps screaming AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
and I run and run and run from it towards.....who knows?

Was that what it was like when you were Saul,
falling from your valiant steed on the road,
landing on the rocks and stones,
bruising your face and your ego;
and descending down a long, long spiral
into oblivion and fear?

Was that what it was like when you had to confess
that you needed your companions to show you the way
and take their hands and put your life
into their hands?

Did you ever think they would turn against you in your weakness
and do you harm in retribution for all those
who had died either physically, spiritually or emotionally
because of your betrayals?

And what of those days of sitting in the dark,
unable to fend for yourself or defend yourself
against one named Ananias
one who was among those on the list
you brought from Jerusalem
to carry back in chains for judgment and stoning?
Did you in all that time ever cry, like Jesus did,
“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabbachtani- my God, my God why have you deserted me?”
and if He answered, what did He say?....

Brother Paul,
God gave you back to us to be a lamp against the darkness;
God gave you back to assure us that the Creator chooses whom He wills and oft
strangely at that.
God renames our inner soul and empowers us to leave the old behind
and strike out down the road less travelled

so we might shout against the silence of our unknowing.,
“Once blind, now I can see; once fearful, now I can embrace your All;
once afraid to speak, now I am emboldened to shout from the rooftops of my life,
‘My God lives’ ” -
Come, you who hear me today,
walk with me towards Damascus;
Paul is waiting...

Fr. Michael: Let us affirm the faith which was revealed to Saul on his journey to
Damascus as we say,

People: **I believe in God the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power
of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

Fr. Michael: Hear our prayer O God as we hear your call. If only the world heard your
Voice as clearly as did Paul and recognized its truth. Give us the grace, courage and
strength to be your Voice in our own generation. We pray for our diocese and its
ministries including St. Paul's, Hazeldean-Kanata and their priests, The Reverend
Stephen Silverthorne & the Reverend Alana McCord and
for the Postulants of our diocese: Bob Albert, Claire Brama, Stephanie McWatt and
John Holgate. We also pray for Faith Lutheran Church and their pastor Martin Malina.
Give us words and images which will help us to walk with others from darkness into
your glorious Light.

People: **Lord, grant us Light and Hope this new day**

Fr. Michael: We pray for a world caught up in an ongoing cycle of violence, for a world
where so many solutions have not been tried because they might weaken the hold of
those who hold power, for a world wandering in the wilderness of despair searching for

your Light; grant us a portion of hope to share with others.

People: **Lord, grant us Light and Hope this new day.**

Fr. Michael: We pray for those who find prejudice and hatred to be a way of life for them, for those who are trapped in webs of conceit, for those who see their place only through the lens of displacing and belittling others. Grant us courage to confront others with the darkness which blinds them and at the same time be willing to see and remove the same from our own lives.

People: **Lord, grant us Light and Hope this new day.**

Fr. Michael: For those who believe all forms of prejudice which stop them from seeing their neighbour as a brother or sister, for those with extreme religious or political views that strip others of their choices and their dignity, for those who are so self-interested that they cannot see the needs and hopes of others.

People: **Lord, grant us Light and Hope this new day.**

Fr. Michael: For those who are undergoing stress and trials in their lives today – for the lonely, the hungry; for those who have lost their sense of self-worth, for those caught in the vicious cycle of addictive behaviours; for our families and our friends, especially those whom we hold in our hearts and for our parish family Marjorie, Kirsten, Howard, Irene, Jeanette, Cheryl, Zachariah, Roy; and for those who spread joy and hope .

People: **Lord, grant us Light and Hope this new day.**

Fr. Michael: Almighty God, who on the day of Pentecost sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles with the wind from heaven and with tongues of fire filling them with joy and the boldness to preach the gospel by the power of that same Spirit, strengthen each of us to witness to your Truth and to draw everyone to the fire of your Love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (from Layanglicana.org)

Fr. Michael: Let us now turn to the One who is the Source of all goodness and pray,

People: **This earth , full of your glory, praises your Name through unspoken words of beauty and peace, reveals your Love through the hand of a stranger and the gift of your Grace, praises your provision through living water and food to eat and reveals your Word through daily blessings and the breath we draw. This earth, full of your glory, praises your name.**

When we have failed to recognize your Love in the actions of friends or strangers, forgive us. When we have failed to recognize your presence in the world in which we live, forgive us. When we have failed to remember your gospel in our actions, thoughts and word, forgive us. Renew our hearts in worship, our minds in wisdom and our hands in service. Take our lives, Lord, and use them as a sacrifice of Love.

(Prayers for Epiphany, Faith and Worship)

Fr. Michael: You challenge us to follow you not by staying where we are but by stepping out in faith, casting our nets into the deep waters known to Titus and Timothy. You challenge us to trust you and to be prepared for all eventualities, even when the load is heavy and we struggle to succeed. But with your challenge comes blessing. Wherever Jesus went crowds flocked to be near him and even today we gather together to hear his words, to sing his praises and to learn more about our Lord and Saviour. Be with us Father, and lead us in our singing and praying and meditations and as we meet with you today, bless us so that we might become a blessing for others. Amen (from Prayers for Epiphany, Faith and Worship)

Fr. Michael: You break in, O God – on the road you break in we don't believe, you break in O God and change everything. You break in, O God -with an invitation and with the truth. You break in O God, with a new world and shower us with your intentions for the future. O God, break in once again and use the gifts that we are to build your kingdom and change our world once more for you. Amen

(from Mucky Paws by Roddy Hamilton)

People: Lord, help us to steer the great ship that is your Church through the powerful currents and shifting sands that surround us. Help us to set a true course, and not to be deflected by cross-winds as we set out for the high seas, refusing to seek the shelter of safe harbours. Fill our sails as we set our course to your Star Jesus.

Our peace is in your presence Lord. We are calm when you are close. Winds may wail and waves may rise, but we will cross the seas with you. So Lord, take our commitment and channel it to your purposes, so that we truly serve you today and all the days of our lives. Amen.

Fr. Michael: By your Grace we stand here, your creation worshipping its Creator with this our sacrifice of praise. You are the everything we desire, the everything we do not deserve. You are the love we have yet to find, the peace beyond imagining. You are the breath of life enlivening the hardest of hearts. You are the vibrant colours, illuminating even the hardest dawn. You are the truth that calls in quiet whisper and through storm.

You are the precious moment we reach out and touch the divine. For those days when we forget; when life distracts and we lose focus, when our self imposes its own will, when our praise and worship fail to please, forgive us. Embrace us once again in sweet and loving fellowship with you and with all the saints in heaven and here on this good earth.

(from Prayers for Epiphany, faith and Worship)

Fr. Michael: May Christ who called Paul to his service and to preach the good news to the world and who led Timothy and Titus to sacrificial witness for your precious name, strengthen us all to witness to God's grace and love. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Spirit be among us and remain with us always. Amen

Announcements, and Celebrations

-Holy Trinity Vestry Meeting - February 20

-WE ARE INVITED: We, the family of Holy Trinity, have been invited by The Reverend Canon George Kwari, Incumbent of the parish of St. Stephen's Ottawa to join with them on SUNDAY, JANUARY 30 to celebrate our life together in the diocese and in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because we worship at 10:30 and St. Stephen's service is normally at 10, Frs George and Michael have shown their true Anglican heritage - through compromise – we will gather at 10:15 to celebrate our shared life in Christ. Fr. George will lead the worship and Fr. Michael will preach. Full details of the “how” we will gather together over Zoom will be given next week, once we have made the full plan.

Final Dismissal

Worship follows the Holy Eucharist in the Book of Alternative Services.

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