

The Process of Conversion

Name: _____

Conversion is the turning from one way of life to another. A conversion story recounts a person's turning from a way of life that is without God or is in rebellion against him or that is lukewarm to a way of life that is fully focused on God, where he is in the preeminent spot in one's life. Often there is an encounter or experience of God that begins the change. There are three main parts in a conversion story: (1) life before conversion, (2) the moment of conversion, and (3) life after conversion.

Saint Paul has a rather miraculous conversion story. Summarize the three parts of it. Refer to Acts 9:1–22 (page 27 of the Student Text) and quote any verses that apply.

Paul's life before conversion

Answers may include advancing in Judaism beyond many people

his own age, “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), and persecuting those of the Way.

The moment of conversion

Answers may include any verses from Acts 9:3–19; Paul was

on his way to Damascus when he was blinded by a bright light;

Jesus called to him from heaven; and Ananias baptized him.

Life after conversion

Answers may include Paul became an apostle to the Gentiles; he

traveled the Mediterranean preaching the Gospel; and he suffered

much to make the Gospel known (see Acts 9:16).

Reflection Question

Not only does Paul have a conversion story, but so do you. Each of us may be at a different place in our conversion story. That “moment” or series of events leading to conversion may not have happened yet. For many blessed to be baptized as infants and grow up in Christian families, there are still many moments of conversion in our lives where God calls us to turn away from sin or something that is keeping us from a deeper relationship with him. Regardless of where you are in your walk with Christ, write a response to the prompt below.

Tell your conversion story or share where you are in your conversion story and what that is like.

Answers may vary.

The Conversion on the Way to Damascus

Name: _____

Spend a few moments looking at Caravaggio's painting *The Conversion on the Way to Damascus* on page 26 of the Student Text. This painting depicts Saint Paul's conversion in Acts 9. **What do you notice at first?**

Note the dramatic difference between light and darkness. The light shines on Saint Paul, the horse, and the attendant, but we do not see the source of the light. This is the "light from heaven," the light of Christ's call, that bathes Paul in Christ's presence.

If the light is from Heaven, what do you think the darkness symbolizes?

The evils of Paul's former life of persecuting the Christians

Notice Paul's outstretched arms. **What do you think they represent?**

Answers may vary.

Paul's outstretched arms are symbolic of the years that Paul, then known as Saul, spent resisting Jesus, pushing against him while persecuting the Christians: "Saul laid waste the Church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). Paul's outstretched arms might also represent how he was about to completely reach out to God, yield to Christ and his grace, convert, be baptized, and become a Christian.

Are there areas in your life where you, like Paul, are resisting Jesus? If so, what are they?

Answers may vary.

Are there areas in your life where you are reaching out to God? If so, what are they?

Answers may vary.

Look at the ground under Paul. What is he lying on and what is on the ground next to him? What do you think they represent?

Answers may vary.

Paul is lying on his cloak, which is red, a color often used to symbolize blood. Notice that his sword is also on the ground next to him. His old way of life of rounding up the Christian and having them persecuted is symbolized here in the blood-red cloak and the sword. This also foreshadows the end of Paul's life, when he was beheaded by a sword and when his blood was shed for love of Christ and in service of the Gospel.

What detail of this painting is your favorite and how does it help you appreciate the significance of Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus?

Answers may vary.
