

The ACTS of the Apostles

THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL

As part from Jesus himself, St Paul has to be one of the most influential Christian figures of all time. More than half of the Acts of the Apostles is focused on Paul's ministry, and a large proportion of the New Testament is dominated by Paul's epistles. Many people associate Paul with the portrait that Luke paints in Acts, especially his extraordinary conversion on the road to Damascus, and his many missionary journeys, through which he zealously spreads the Gospel, despite opposition and hostility.

We first hear about Paul in Acts 7:58 directly before Stephen dies. He approves of the killing of Stephen, and soon afterwards begins a violent persecution against the Church (Acts 8:3). Paul's opposition to early Christian believers is likely owing to a strict religious belief system, which was formed by the education that he received "according to our ancestral law" (Acts 22:3). Prior to his conversion, Paul would have believed that many of the concepts central to the faith of early Jewish Christians were opposed to, and perhaps dangerous to, his Jewish beliefs, particularly the idea that the crucified Jesus was God's anointed Messiah and that God raised Jesus from the dead. A clash of religious belief systems, thus, led Paul to oppose and seek the destruction of the nascent Christian community.

Paul's mention of being "zealous for God" in Acts 22:3 (see, also, Phil. 3:6 and Gal. 1:14) has led some scholars to think that Paul was a strict Pharisee who believed that his religious activism, which manifested itself in violence and oppression, was part of, and would bring about, God's end of time plans for Israel. It is hard to imagine how such a mindset could be changed, let alone envisage a scenario where Paul would adopt the central tenets of a faith that he formerly opposed, and become one of its greatest advocates. This radical transformation is also evident from the point of view of Gentile inclusion. Prior to his conversion, Paul would have believed that Gentiles as Gentiles were to be excluded from God's covenant people,

whereas the post-conversion Paul advocated the inclusion of Gentiles as Gentiles in the covenant people, without, for example, the need, for circumcision (Acts 15:2).

It was Paul's experience of the risen Lord on the road to Damascus that facilitated such a change in standpoint (Acts 9:3-19). Luke narrates that a light from heaven flashed around Paul, that he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Interestingly, Paul's response, "Who are you, Lord?" shows that he interprets this experience as an experience of the Lord, perhaps similar to other manifestations of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures (e.g. Ex. 3:2-4:17). It is not until the reply "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" that Paul is forced to confront the reality that Jesus and the Lord are somehow synonymous with each other, and that all he opposed in the past regarding Jesus was now foundationless. Paul's experience of the resurrected crucified Messiah showed him that Jesus was God's anointed Messiah and that God had, in fact, raised Jesus from the dead.

This experience was so foundational and transformative that Paul recounts it on two later occasions in Acts, giving the impression that retelling his conversion experience was part of his preaching style. Paul obviously sees value in using personal testimony in his missionary endeavours. In recalling his experience to a Jewish audience in Acts 22:6-16 and Gentile listeners in Acts 26:12-18, Paul mentions Jesus' words, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" This highlights his former life as an opponent of the Christian faith, and allows an audience to draw a comparison between the pre-conversion Saul and the apostle Paul who now stands before them. It also persuades an audience to the truth and validity of Paul's conversion experience, given that it is hard to imagine how such a radical turnabout could be achieved without God's intervention or grace. Perhaps, there is a lesson to be learned from Luke's Paul about the importance of personal testimony to evangelization today! ■

SoulSpace

The ACTS of the Apostles

The Conversion of St Paul

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Season colour: **WHITE**

SERIES: The Acts of the Apostles – The Church's Beginnings

In this series, **Diane Corkery** invites us to reflect on some of the key themes of the Acts of the Apostles


Today's readings:
Acts 13:14, 43-52
Apoc 7:9, 14-17
Ps 99
Rev 7:9, 14-17



SUNDAY 17TH APRIL 2016
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

This is Good Shepherd Sunday, a day of special prayer for vocations to the work of service in the Church. There is the enduring command of Christ to his Church to go out and preach to all people. There is need for people of faith to respond to that command, people who are prepared to dedicate their lives to this work for the sake of the gospel.

The Lord has risen; it is true! Through our baptism, he calls us to proclaim new life to the world. Pray for those who herald the good news as priests in our diocese. If you are considering a vocation to priesthood, contact Fr. Jim Murray on 071 916 2136; Fr. John Coughlan at 071 966 2012 or e-mail: vocations@elphindiocese.ie

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION We congratulate all pupils from SCOIL CNOC NA RÉ who receive their First Holy Communion in our Cathedral at 10:30 a.m. Mass today. 

A 24 HOUR SILENT EUCHARISTIC VIGIL FOR THE UNBORN CHILD

Takes place in the Cathedral Blessed Sacrament Chapel from 9 a.m. on Saturday April 23rd to Sunday April 24th. If you can give an hour of your time to pray for this very important intention please contact Lisa on 087 627 4621.

APPEAL FOR THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE NEXT SUNDAY - APRIL 24TH

Pope Francis has requested all Catholic churches in Europe to take up a special collection for the people of Ukraine on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, April 24th 2016. According to UN figures, over 9,000 have died since conflict began there in late 2013.

Special envelopes available for this appeal in the Cathedral this weekend. Please take one and return it next weekend.

"This gesture of charity, in addition to relieving material suffering, is intended to express my personal closeness and solidarity, and that of the entire Church, for Ukraine." Pope Francis.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK Lord we thank you for your church throughout the world; grant it life, strength and truth. Amen.

READINGS FOR SUNDAY NEXT 24TH APRIL 1st Reading: Acts 14:21-27; 2nd Reading: Apoc. 21:1-5; Gospel: Jn. 13:31-35.

POPE FRANCIS 2ND EXHORTATION ON THE FAMILY

Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love: On Love in the Family is now online on the Elphin Diocesan website at www.elphindiocese.ie

JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY - POPE FRANCIS' WORDS

"To be merciful means to grow in a love which is courageous, generous and real."

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH – 2200 FAMILIES

SUNDAY 3RD APRIL PARISH ENV: €2,073 PL/STAND. ORD: €1,376
 SUNDAY 10TH APRIL PARISH ENV: €2,270 PL/STAND. ORD: €1,511
 THANK YOU for your contribution.

ST MARY'S PRESBYTERY ☎ 071 916 2670 **SACRISTY** ☎ 071 916 1261
 ✉ e-mail us @ news@sligocathedral.ie We welcome your comments.

BINGO - GILLOOLY HALL - TONIGHT APRIL 17TH AT 9:00 p.m.

This week's jackpot is €1,150.

ST MARY'S PARISH - AN INVITATION TO COME ON PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY DOOR - SATURDAY APRIL 30TH AT 11:00 A.M.

"By crossing the threshold of the Holy Door we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us." Pope Francis

Bishop Kevin is delighted to invite us all on pilgrimage to the Holy Door in our Cathedral. We will gather for departure in our Cathedral at 11 a.m. for a visit to Tobernault Holy Well - a place of serenity and welcome to pilgrims for generations.

We will then return to Gillooly Hall at 12:30 p.m. for a light lunch followed by a short inspirational film and preparation for passing through the Holy Door. After entering by the Holy Door we will be following Stations associated with this Holy Year, with catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Dynamic of Confession given by Bishop Kevin. The day will conclude with a time of prayer and Confession. To book a place please contact the Cathedral Parish Office on 071 916 2670 admin@sligocathedral.ie or see the leaflets at the Cathedral entrance.

PILGRIM OF THE MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP ICON PILGRIMAGE TO THE CATHEDRALS OF IRELAND

The Mother of Perpetual Help Icon pilgrimage to all 26 Roman Catholic Cathedrals of Ireland will arrive in our Cathedral for Mass at 7 p.m. on Friday May 6th 2016. The Icon will leave at 12 noon on Saturday May 7th. This pilgrimage is being organised by the Redemptorists to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the devotion to our Mother of Perpetual Help and its custodianship by the Redemptorists during this time. Visit www.followtheicon.ie

APOSTOLATE OF EUCHARISTIC ADORATION SUNDAY APRIL 24TH

All are invited on a special Year of Mercy Pilgrimage to Knock. With a full programme organised for Adults, Teens & Children beginning at 11:30 am. Fr. Declan Hurley Adm. Navan, will give a talk on 'Gazing at the face of Mercy' at 1:30 pm in the Basilica. Bishop Kevin will be chief celebrant at 3pm Mass launching a National Crusade of Prayer for Vocations. Visit www.eucharisticadoration.ie

FEAST DAYS THIS WEEK Mon 18th St Legerian, bishop; Thurs 21st St Anselm, bishop & Doctor of the Church; Sat 23rd St George, martyr.

THE ANNUAL CHURCH GATE COLLECTION In aid of St. Joseph's Young Priests Society takes place *next weekend*, 23rd/24th April. Please support, and pray for vocations and Seminarians.

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS**
THE WEEK AHEAD

Today April 17th **First Holy Communion** Scoil Cnoc na Ré 10:30 am
Baptism Cathedral 1:00 p.m.
Confirm Our Children Mass 7:00 p.m.
 Thursday 21st **'Thursday Tea'** Upstairs in Cathedral Sacristy immediately after 10:30 a.m. Mass
 Friday 22nd **Ulster University Choir Concert** 7:30 p.m.
 Saturday 23rd **Confessions** 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Sunday 24th **First Holy Communion** St John's N.S. 10:30 a.m.

Dates to remember

ULSTER UNIVERSITY CHOIR CONCERT in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Sligo on Friday 22nd April at 7.30pm. Admission free.

MERCY COLLEGE PARENTS ASSOCIATION Afternoon Tea and Fashion Show in The Radisson Hotel today Sunday 17th April at 3 pm. All welcome

CENSUS 2016 Forms are being distributed in advance of Census Night 24 April 2016. Please cooperate with Enumerators who carry official photographic ID.

GALILEE COMMUNITY, BOYLE Alf Monaghan will give a series of talks on early Irish Christianity, at Galilee Community, Boyle, every Tuesday evening of April at 8pm. For more ☎ 071 966 4101 or e-mail: galileecommunity@gmail.com

MAKE-A-WISH FUNDRAISER 'Heroes' themed walk around Killaspugbrone Loop in Strandhill today, April 17th @ 1pm. Dress up optional, face painting as well as great prizes. Organised by IT Sligo's 4th Year Business Tourism students.

YEAR OF MERCY HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE Led by Archbishop Eamon Martin Sept 9-17 cost €1,495 per person. To book contact MAP Travel 01 878 3111.

ANAM CARA Monthly Parent Evening with guest speaker Peter McCartan on Thursday April 21st from 7:30pm to 9:30pm in the Harlequin Hotel, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. All **Anam Cara** Services are available free of charge to bereaved parents. To book RSVP to info@anamcara.ie ☎ 01 404 5378 by April 20th.

YEATS SOCIETY POETRY CIRCLE 1916 COMMEMORATION All welcome to Seán MacDiarmada Railway Station on 20th April 4.15-5.30 pm for a short history of the station & life of Seán MacDiarmada ending with a selection of 1916 poems.

GALA EVENING OF MUSIC In aid of MS North West Therapy Centre & Music Dept. of SGS hosted by RTÉ's Tommy Gorman in Knocknarea Arena on Sat April 23rd at 8pm with a line up of some of Sligo's finest talented musicians. Tickets €15/€12 Concessions from MS North West Therapy Centre; Essential Seconds, Wine St Car Park; Sligo Grammar School, or Deirdre on 087 988 3196.

SLIGO DRAMA CIRCLE Present 'Wasn't It A GoodLife', a re-imagining of April 1916 in Sligo Courthouse from Tues 26-Fri 29 April @8pm. Adm. free with a request to buy a North West Hospice candle. All donations go to the Hospice.

SLIGO DYSLEXIA BRANCH Thank all who gave so generously last weekend to their Church Gate Collection. €448.35 was collected. These funds go to a workshop for children with Dyslexia (4th class to Junior Certificate) during the year. For further information please contact Terri @ 086 313 4545.

STAR OF THE SEA RETREAT CENTRE Mary Kate Hagan's "Wellbeing & stress in the context of our nurturing earth" Sat 23rd April, 10am-4pm €25 incl teas/ coffees & light lunch mercymullaghmore@eircom.net 9176722 / 0871825533.

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL - ONE DAY RETREAT April 23rd in Summerhill College from 9:15 a.m. concluding with Mass at 5 p.m. Speakers: Fr. Thady Doyle and John Coyne, speaking on the fruits of the Holy Spirit, Baptism & Christian Healing for the Family. Contact Ursula at 085 776 5294.

anniversary & Remembrances		
DAY	8.00 A.M.	10.30 A.M.
MON 18 th	MARTIN McLAUGHLIN	--
TUES 19 th		PAT & ANNIE ALLEN
THURS 21 st	JOHN & KATHLEEN McTERNAN	HELEN & DENNIS HARRINGTON

If you would like to book an Anniversary, Remembrance or Month's Mind Mass please contact the Cathedral Sacristan on 071 916 1261.