

Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul

January 24-25, 2015

Readings: Acts 22:3-16; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Mark 16:15-18

The patronal feast of an Archdiocese and a building is always a day worthy of celebration. This Archdiocese has had a rich history. At one time, the entire state of Minnesota fell under the jurisdiction of the early Bishops of Quebec. By 1783, after the Treaty of Paris, the Diocese of Quebec was restricted to the Canada, and the Catholics in this new country still fell under the Vicar Apostolic of England.

For obvious reasons, that would not last long, and Bishop John Carroll became the first American bishop. Most of this territory fell under the care of the Diocese of Dubuque in 1837. Four years later, Fr. Lucien Galtier built a 25X 18 ft. log chapel 200 feet from the banks of the Mississippi between what would soon become Cedar and Minnesota Streets. He did this to provide a worship space for the fur traders, but suddenly, in 1850, the chapel became a Cathedral, as the Diocese of St. Paul was established, and a new journey began.

To the great beneficence of James J. Hill, we all owe a debt of gratitude, for he, among others, made the building of this great landmark possible, our city's fourth Cathedral. Today, we kick off our centennial celebration of this building. "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature." With these words, Jesus gave the apostles a glimpse into the mission for which he called them. Had they known the magnitude then, would they have had second thoughts?

Conversion is a very scary word for most people because no matter how carefully you package it, to some it will always sound like there is something wrong with them. To change is in itself an admission of sorts, an admission that you may have needed to change.

It is language that carries with it all sorts of connotations— ‘conversion experience,’ ‘going through a conversion,’ and the like. In some cases, conversion can be radical as in the case of St. Paul, recounted in the Scriptures. It can also be gradual, periodic and incomplete. Our periods of spiritual fervor are followed by moments of doubt or spiritual laziness, *acedia*.

In these times, it may be through the help of another, a classmate, a friend or co-worker that we are able to pull out of it and take a fresh look. Then there is the mystery of the loss of one’s faith, painful to watch in another, yet part and parcel of the reality of life.

For our parish to flourish, each of us must continually seek deeper conversion. It is quite overwhelming if we think that we must carry the load ourselves. We will continually fall short if we approach the faith as a mere list in life to be conquered or checked off our “to-do” list. Rather, we must accept a reality greater than ourselves. “Lord, I am yours; mold me, shape me, form me, dwell in me. Make my heart like unto thine.”

For nearly 100 years this building has drawn the devout, the curious, the seekers, the lost and broken, the rich and famous, the humble of heart. All who enter these doors are equal before God, and equally small in comparison to his majesty and grandeur.

We are all equally invited to partake in the life-transforming message of our Lord, a message that once it got through radically changed Saul; so much so, that he truly never looked back. Lord, once we put our hands to the plow, give us the grace to never look back, but always to look forward with a sense of joy and hope for all the good that lies ahead of us.