

Week One Handout One – February 20

Paul had a personal encounter with Christ that he cultivated.

How can we do the same?

The format will be presentations by Fr. Ron, personal reflection time, journaling, and sharing.

The goals of the series are:

- 1) Grow in understanding Paul's faith experience.
- 2) Use his experience to understand our own faith experience.

Outline of Week One:

1. Introducing Paul the Apostle

2. The influence of Judaism
 - Palestinian
 - Hellenistic
 - Rabbinic
 - Apocalyptic

3. The Influence of Hellenism

4. The Influence of the Roman Empire

5. Overall theme of this retreat series: "Conversion"

Week One Handout Two

For Reflection and Journaling Week One

(Take a few minutes)

Describe your own life "in Christ." How would you characterize your relationship with Jesus Christ?

As you reflect upon your personal journey of faith, can you discern distinctive moments of "conversion," times when you have truly been "turned around" by God's grace? Have there been moments of dramatic change? Times of more gradual transformation?

In what ways have you become a "new creation" through your faith?

Quietly read over the passage from 2 Corinthians 4:7-11. What are the fragile areas of your own life? How do you respond to them? What is the "treasure" within your own fragile existence?

Sharing Time *Share on one question with one other person*

Assignment — Begin reading Paul's letters; either in canonical order or chronological order. Use Paul for your own personal, spiritual enrichment. Read about 5 pages a day and you will finish by our last session.

Four step method:

- 1) Say a little prayer to Holy Spirit before the open bible asking Holy Spirit to open your mind to God's word, to God's message.
- 2) Read deliberately, reflectively the passage that you have chosen
- 3) Simply sit reflectively with the passage that you have read; what does it say to you now?
- 4) Say a word of thanksgiving to Holy Spirit

Week One Handout Three

For Reflection and Journaling *Choose 1 or 2 now, do others at home:*

1. Read Romans 8:28-39
In this passage Paul expresses his irrepressible confidence that despite all kinds of obstacles, nothing can separate us from God's love. Can you compose (mentally or in writing) a similar list of obstacles that seem to interfere with your hopefulness in life? Do you have the same confidence as Paul that everything will eventually work out for good?
2. Make a list of your good qualities and a list of your faults. Does the one outweigh the other? What do you think Paul would do with such a list? How would he bring it to prayer before God and how would he surrender himself to God's will? Can you imitate Paul in this exercise?
3. Slowly read Psalm 139:1-14. It is a poetic reflection on the mystery of every individual human life. When you pray these words, can you imagine God's grace pumping through your veins? God has called you by name and bestowed a gracious identity upon you. God is closer to you than you can imagine. Thank God in your own words for the gift of this identity.
4. God is pursuing you out of love. How do you see God reaching out to you in your life? How do you feel about the notion that God consistently seeks you out? What kind of response do you think God is asking of you?

Sharing on one question for about 10 minutes?