

Curriculum Tips for Becoming Disciples

Volume 5

Office of Religious Education, Diocese of Wilmington

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Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul—January 25

Invite students to read and dramatize this pivotal event in both Paul's and the Church's history.

Go to Acts 9:1-19 to read St. Luke's account of Paul's conversion.

Have children "interview" Paul before and after his conversion—about his changing attitudes toward Christ (compare Acts 9:20-22, 22:1-15 and Gal. 1:13-14),

toward Gentiles (compare Acts 13:4-50 and Gal. 2:11-14) and towards enemies (compare Acts 26:9-11, Rom. 12:14-21 and 1 Cor. 11-13.)



What is Conversion?

"The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give us a new heart. Conversion is first of all a work of grace of God who makes our hearts return to him...God gives us the strength to begin anew." (CCC 1432)

The first stage in the process of conversion is a **hunger** for what is meaningful, for what is good and true, a yearning for growth and for greater life.



Experience and formal education both help us to **search**. If we are prayerful, we will experience what St. Paul did: the light and the leading of God breaking into our awareness and showing us the Way in Christ.

This **awakening** into God may happen as we watch a snowfall by moonlight or when we feel the love of our family and friends on Valentine's Day. Our eyes may be opened on Ash Wednesday as the cross of ashes is scribed on our foreheads to remind us of how all the things to which we cling will pass away. We will awaken to the God who has been loving and guiding us all through our lives.

And then, like Paul, we will hear the invitation. The **invitation** to open to Christ who is the Bread that can feed our deepest hungers. We will hear God call our names and invite us into the mission of Christ—to bring greater hope and love into this suffering world.



(Tom Zanzig, in Adult Faith Formation Strategies, is the source of this reflection.)

Resources on St. Paul at Faithfirst.com

Faithfirst.com is the website for RCL/Benziger and it offers free lesson plans on Paul for students in primary, intermediate, and junior high classes, as well as for families.

Use the occasion of the Feast of St. Paul (Jan. 25) to have the children read from this website a short appropriate age-level biography of Paul and do a follow-up activity.

Besides the biographies, the primary level focuses on Paul as a missionary, the intermediate level targets the teachings of St. Paul, and the junior high lesson invites young people to write an epistle for our time, giving the community advice on how to be a faithful follower of Christ in today's world.

There is also a map and timeline of Paul's missionary journeys, as well as professional background articles for catechists and other adults.

For those using RCL/Benziger products ([Faith First](#), [Blest Are We](#), [Christ Jesus the Way](#)), the website offers correlations between material on Pauline themes and the textbook.



*Catechesis seeks to form disciples of Christ who bear witness to their Catholic faith in society.
A missionary spirit of evangelization is cultivated and nourished by the teaching and attitudes of Jesus Christ."*

St. Paul Proclaimed the Good News. We Also Proclaim the Good News!

- By sharing the Good News of the Gospel and our Catholic faith with our family, friends and neighbors
- By behavior that shows we are Christians
- By being strengthened for witness through the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ
- By learning from the powerful examples of missionaries, such as St. Patrick and St. Francis Xavier
- By growing in holiness and continually learning about our faith
- By realizing that we share the mission of Christ by virtue of our Baptism
- By prayer to the Holy Spirit who guides us
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(See outcomes under Primary Task 6, Missionary Initiation, in [Becoming Disciples](#).)

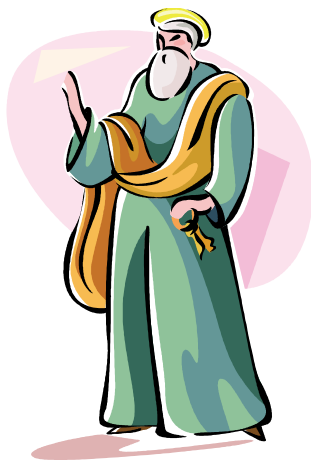
The History of Bishops, Including Bishop Malooly

**Be sure to visit cdow.org
for multi-level activities designed to teach about
bishops, their symbols, the history of bishops in the
Diocese of Wilmington, and Bishop Malooly himself.**

**Discuss in your classes
Bishop Malooly's words about the call to all of us
to be Christian missionaries:**



“I have no predisposed plan for what I will do as your Bishop. I will work with you to develop what we will do together and to continue the good that has occurred. However, what we do will be grounded in Bishop Saltarelli's pastoral letter for the Year of St. Paul. This Pastoral Letter calls each of us to our own unique road to a Damascus conversion experience, during the Year of Saint Paul and asks each of us to hold a mirror to our lives and to ask ourselves: Are we as determined and as energetic about spreading the Catholic faith as Saint Paul was? Each of us is a missionary. Each of us is called to be a saint. From his letter we hear how we are to live as people who are joyful, welcoming, service oriented, who are the face of Jesus for others. From Paul we learn that each person is important. I ask each of you in our parishes, schools and institutions to be hospitable, interested, excited about what you do. I ask you to reinforce and support each other. When I visited a parish a month ago immediately the secretary came out, not knowing who I was, to welcome me and to ask if she could be of help. When I walked in the church, the maintenance man who was working on a project stopped and came over to see if he could be of assistance. Each of us by our own holiness, by our imitation of Jesus, by trying to be the face of Jesus, can lead people to God.”



St. Peter (first century)

Jesus asked Peter to “Feed my sheep.” And so, after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter served as the leader of the early church in Jerusalem. In Jesus' name, he preached and healed and extended the Christian mission to the Gentiles (although St. Paul had to convince him of this new but crucial policy.) According to tradition, Peter became the first bishop of Rome and was martyred there during the reign of Nero. He may have been crucified, but Peter himself insisted that he be hung upside down, unworthy as he was to die like His Savior.

Pope John XXIII, Bishop of Venice, then Rome (1881-1963)

Angelo Roncalli was a bright but simple peasant boy, but he grew up to be a medical chaplain during World War I, a diplomat in countries where there were misunderstandings between Orthodox and Catholic Christians and as Pope, a great reformer in the Church. Pope John XXIII had a great love for all people in the world. He worked for unity in the church and opened the Church to learning from the goodness of the world. Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council to renew the life of Catholics and update the Church's teaching, liturgy, and organization with the hope of one day uniting all Christians.

Archbishop Oscar Romero (1917-1980)

Archbishop Romero felt called to be the voice all the people without a voice in his country of El Salvador. During his sermons, he spoke against political repression. These sermons were broadcast on radio and thousands of people listened. In spite of threats to his life, Archbishop Romero continued to speak out for justice and his boldness eventually cost him his life. He was shot to death while celebrating Mass at a hospital chapel.

The Role of Parents in a Child's Journey of Faith



“Formal catechesis in a religious education class is only one aspect of a child/youth’s life-long journey of faith. This life is influenced by the faith-life, commitments and decisions of his or her parents.

Pope Benedict XVI, addressing parents at Vespers in Munich, urged the parents to accompany their children on their journey of faith by attending Mass each Sunday and praying together at home. The Pope said: “Prayer does not only bring us nearer to God but also nearer to one another. It is a powerful source of peace and joy. Family life becomes more joyful and expansive whenever God is there and his closeness is experienced in prayer.”

- *Do you as a parent talk to your children in preparation for Mass*
- *Do you talk to them after Mass as a follow-up? What did they hear and experience?*
- *Do you pray with your children before meals, before bedtime, before a trip, etc.?*

One purpose of the “Becoming Disciples Curriculum” is to support families in their mission as primary educators in the faith.

From Introduction to Becoming Disciples, p. 5

Ways Parents and Parish Can Be Partners

1. **Keep a common goal in mind—we want our children to have strong values, the ability to make moral choices, and a felt sense that God loves them and their lives have meaning and purpose.**
2. **Celebrate Catholic symbols and practices—religious art, a holy water font in the home, the practice of praying together or blessing your children before bed, a prominent place for the Bible, celebrating religious holidays and seasons.**
3. **Family experts say the best way to ensure family success is to eat dinner as a family on a regular basis. Also find reasons to celebrate at the parish with food and fun. And, of course, the most important meal we can share is the Eucharist.**
4. **Create a loving and secure environment for our children. Through words and deeds, we foster a climate where people aren’t afraid to risk, to make mistakes, to be who they really are and are supported in their spiritual search. Engender a climate of respect and forgiveness.**
5. **Practice faith as a family through doing service for others. These practices become all the more powerful when parents value them. Example speaks volumes.**
6. **Connect our children to the Grand Story of Our Faith—through sharing Bible stories and stories of the saints.**

