Paul's conversion on the way to persecute the Church in Damascus is one of the great accounts from the early Church of how God is able to transform our natures, and to use our gifts to do good and to build up the Kingdom.

The importance of the conversion of the "Apostle to the Gentiles" is evident from the three accounts given in the book of the New Testament *Acts of Apostles* (Ch 9: verses 1-30; 22:3-21; 26:9-20). Here is one of these, in which Paul remembers and gives an account of his first encounter with the risen Jesus:

**Acts of Apostles** 22: 3-16

"I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

"As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,
*'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?'*
And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And He said to me,
*'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.'*
Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me,
*'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.'*
And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

"And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know His will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from His mouth; for you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

We celebrate the Conversion of St Paul on the 25th of January.