

Reflection Tuesday Week 3 The Conversion of St Paul 2022.

Have you ever wondered how many times Paul heard those he arrested say to him *"Why are you doing this?"* At the time, he was quite clear why. Those he arrested were blasphemers, disloyal to God and were leading others astray from the truth. In the end, however, Paul had to face up to the question and examine his conscience. *"Was what he was doing right? Is this really what God was asking of him?"* And then the realisation came to him and caused a *volte face*. How much suffering must Paul have gone through in responding to the questions and discovering that he was persecuting God not the Christians. Timothy Radcliffe, in reflecting on Paul's conversion, suggests that we need to experience goodness triumph over evil and for Justice to win through. But it can only be a victory if no one is crushed, no-one is thrown out and everybody has a place.

The whole world is losing a model of living together believing they are fighting for the truth. But we so often misunderstand. Muslims and Christians in Syria have been living together over 1,436 years without wars, despite some disagreements and conflicts. Over the years peace and coexistence have outweighed controversy! In Qara, Muslims helped rebuild the churches after the occupation by IS. The birth of Christ is celebrated in the mosque and the birth of the Prophet in the church. The Muslim women go to the monastery to make soap and clothes with the nuns. Together they make candles, very necessary with only four hours of electricity a day. In Tartus, there is a mosque dedicated to Our Lady, pray the *"Our Lady"* and listen as the imam sings the Quranic sutra of Mary.

Too often we believe conversion concerns the other(s) when true conversion always begins with ourselves as seen in Christian Unity. Assumptionists are called to a new conversion every day of their lives. St Paul shows us what this can mean. Let us pray for his guidance and help in this.

A Sunday school teacher asked her children on the way to service, *"And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?"* One little girl replied, *"Because people are sleeping."*