

Brother Saul

WHAT WE FOUND

- Saul was not seeking, not curious, and not at a low point. He was on a trip to arrest people. Any theory of evangelization that requires openness first has to explain this chapter.
- The voice said "why do you persecute me." Not my followers, not my Church. Christ counted an assault on his people as an assault on himself.
- The risen Christ, having appeared in person, refused to say what Saul should do next, and sent him into the city to wait for a man.
- Saul was shown Ananias coming before Ananias had agreed to go. Both ends were arranged, and the obedience of a frightened disciple was inside the arrangement rather than outside it.
- Ananias said "Here I am," then heard the name and argued. God did not tell him he would be safe and did not minimize the danger. He did explain: Saul is a chosen instrument who will carry the name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, and he will suffer for it. That is explanation without reassurance.
- The first word the Church said to its persecutor was "Brother," and Christ chose to have a disciple say it rather than saying it himself.
- Ananias does not appear again in the narrative of Acts, surfacing once more only when Paul retells the story at Acts 22:12-16. His whole recorded part was to walk to a house he did not want to enter, call the man brother, lay hands on him, and baptize him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the head and the members

St. Augustine teaches in substance that when the Lord asked Saul why he was persecuting him, no one had touched him in heaven; it was his body on earth that was being struck, and the head cried out for the members.

From this he draws the conclusion the Church has held ever since: Christ and his Church together make up the whole Christ, so that what is done to the least member is done to him. The Catechism states the same doctrine at CCC 795.

St. Augustine, summarized from his sermons and scriptural commentary. A faithful summary of a theme he returns to often, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI on what happened to Saul

In his catecheses on St. Paul, Pope Benedict XVI argued in substance that what took place on that road is badly described as a moral improvement. Saul was not a scoundrel who reformed; he was a serious, observant, zealous man who was overturned by a Person.

He pointed to how Paul himself describes it: not that he found Christ, but that Christ Jesus made him his own, took hold of him. Grace was not the reward for a search. It interrupted one that was headed the wrong way.

Pope Benedict XVI, summarized from his general audience catecheses on St. Paul (2008-2009); the scriptural anchor is Philippians 3:12.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Council of Trent on where any of this starts

Against the charge that Catholics believe we start the work of our own salvation, the Council of Trent taught in its decree on justification that the beginning of justification is derived from the prevenient grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from

his call, by which people are called with no existing merits of their own.

Keep this in your pocket. It is the Church's formal statement of exactly what Acts 9 dramatizes: the movement begins on God's side, every time, and a person who is running the wrong way can be called anyway.

Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Session 6 (1547). Document-level citation; no chapter number given.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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Rung 8 of the ladder. Do the errand. Ananias's whole contribution was walking to a house.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Name the one small concrete thing you have been avoiding with one of them. The message you have not sent, the visit you have not made, the apology you owe, the invitation you keep almost extending.
- Do it this week. Not a bigger version of it. That one.
- Before you go, say the fear out loud to God, in plain words, the way Ananias did. Do not tidy it up first.
- **Bring your sealed page from Take-Home 1 next week. Still sealed.**

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel."

Acts 9:15

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Mark 10:17-27 and 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 before we meet. Both are short. And bring your sealed page from the first week, still sealed.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 795.** Christ and his Church together make up the whole Christ.
- **CCC 153.** Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.
- **CCC 1996.** Grace is the free and undeserved help God gives us to respond to his call.
- **CCC 2001.** The preparation of a person for grace is already the work of grace.
- **CCC 2002.** God's free initiative demands a free human response.