

CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF PAUL

Last June 28, Pope Benedict declared a year dedicated to Saint Paul, beginning one year from that day and extending through June 29, 2009. The Holy Father said that the year, marking the 2000th anniversary of the saint's birth, should be used to heighten appreciation for the Apostle to the Gentiles and to his project of promoting the Christian faith and the unity of believers.



ABOUT SAINT PAUL

Paul, also known as Saul, of Jewish descent, was born in Tarsus in the early first century A.D. His family were Roman citizens, and had a large tent making business. He moved to the city of Jerusalem as a boy where he joined in the attacks against the newly emerging Christian faith. As a young man he became personally and passionately involved in violent attacks against Christians. He was known as the man who was present, at the stoning of Stephen.

According to the New Testament, he made a journey to the city of Damascus. Although he was going with the intention of persecuting the Christians there, he had a life changing vision of Jesus. With great zeal in his newfound faith in Christ, both he and apostle Peter became two of the main contributors in the spreading of Christianity.

Paul made three major trips throughout large portions of the Roman world as a missionary, spreading the Gospel as he traveled. He met his death (A.D.67) while a captive in Rome; this as a direct result of his message. Because of his work, Paul is recognized worldwide for his message of the 'Good News', which was later partially encapsulated in the New Testament. Moreover, Paul was known as 'Paul of Tarsus', partially due to the excellent education he received both in Tarsus and Jerusalem, combined with his experiences as a Christian spreading the Good News. Paul, despite not being amongst the original 12 Apostles of Christ, along with Peter, showed great courage in spreading the Gospel and standing strong in their faith in Christ. It is partially for this reason that many accepted him as the Apostle from Tarsus.

Paul, according to this source, had a Roman nose, wide forehead, and short hair. His face at times seemed like a man's at other times like an angel's. He appeared to have been a bow legged man of short stature.

PRESENCE OF GOD

Remember that God not only is in this place with us, but in a very true way God is in our heart in the very center of our spirit. St. Paul reminds us that "we live and move and have our very being" in God. (Acts 17:28) Let us excite in our heart a very real reverence for the God Who is present to and in us.

HYMN: THERE'S A WIDNESS IN GOD'S MERCY

There's wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Savior;
There is healing in His blood.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

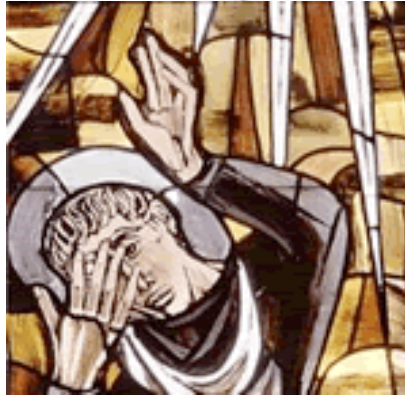
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of our mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO TIMOTHY 4:1-8

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

RESPONSE

1. As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.
2. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
 1. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day,
 2. and not only to me but also to all who have longed for His appearing.



During this Pauline Year, may we take time to:

CONSIDER PAUL'S CONVERSION EXPERIENCE ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS AND OUR PERSONAL CONVERSION IN THE YEAR OF SAINT PAUL

I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. Get up and go into the city, where you will be told what to do. (Acts of the Apostles 9:5-6)

Paul was complicit in the murder of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, whose feast day we celebrate on December 26. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that those who were stoning Stephen to death "laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul." (Acts 7:58).

LIVE AND PRAY CHRIST IN THE YEAR OF SAINT PAUL

It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)

Many great saints have built their lives on Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." It can be so easy for us to hear these inspired words over and over again during the course of our lives and never really understand their revolutionary character.

PRAY, STUDY AND LIVE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD IN THE PAULINE YEAR

The Word of God cannot be chained. (2 Timothy 2:9)

Recall the ancient tradition of Lectio divina (divine or sacred reading): the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about

that interior dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to Him with trusting openness of heart.

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN THE YEAR OF SAINT PAUL

I was determined that while I was with you I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians: 2:2)

The Cross of Jesus Christ is at the center of all that Paul does. He teaches us how to deal with the hardships and grief of life. Paul experienced it all: rejection, calumny, indifference, shipwrecks, imprisonment and, ultimately, martyrdom as symbolized in art by Paul holding a sword.

REKINDLE A LOVE FOR THE EUCHARIST AND THE CHURCH IN THE YEAR OF SAINT PAUL

Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:16)

One of the classic Pauline images is that of the Body of Christ as a communion of individuals with specific charisms and talents which build up of the Body. Paul shows that the Eucharist is the source of unity, harmony and communion in the Body. Our reverent reception of the Eucharist is the great spark of missionary activity that leads us, like Saint Paul, to the ends of the earth.

PRAYER

O glorious St. Paul, after persecuting the Church you became by God's grace its most zealous Apostle. To carry the knowledge of Jesus, our Divine Savior, to the uttermost parts of the earth you joyfully endured prison, scourgings, stonings, and shipwreck, as well as all manner of persecutions culminating in the shedding of the last drop of your blood for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Obtain for us the grace to labor strenuously to bring the faith to others and to accept any trials and tribulations that may come our way. Help us to be inspired by your Epistles and to partake of your indomitable love for Jesus, so that after we have finished our course we may join you in praising Him in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

*No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love Him.*

1 Corinthians 2:9





**Facing danger at sea, and fearful persecution,
you became a chosen vessel of the Savior.
With your sermons you enlightened the nations,
and to the Athenians you revealed the unknown God.
Teacher of the nations, Saint Paul, the Apostle, protector of us all,
keep us who honor you, safe from every trial and danger.**



**Saint John Baptist de a Salle
and all you holy Brothers, who have gone before us,
assist us in taking Paul's message to heart
and passing it on to those we encounter.**

**Live Jesus in our hearts.
Forever!**