

Year of Saint Paul

June 28, 2008 – June 29, 2009

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Who is St. Paul?

St. Paul is one of the greatest saints of our Church. At first, he was not a follower of Jesus. In fact, he never met Jesus while he was on earth. Like Jesus, he was a Jew, but Saul lived in Tarsus, some distance from the land where Jesus grew up. His Jewish name was Saul. Saul's family sent him to Jerusalem to study with great Jewish leaders of the day. Saul received a very good education and was identified as a Pharisee. The Pharisees were known for their strict observation of religious practices. As a man so rooted in the Jewish faith, Saul could not understand why so many Jews were following Jesus. That is how he became an enemy of the first Christians. He wanted to punish and even kill them. Jesus appeared to Saul and asked why Saul was trying to hurt him. After that, Saul was baptized as a Christian. He changed his name to Paul and traveled to many lands to teach about Jesus.

Why is this year called the Year of Saint Paul?

Pope Benedict XVI declared this year as a Jubilee Year of Saint Paul to mark the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Saint Paul, believed to have been born in Tarsus between the years 5 and 10 B.C. Our Holy Father also wants this year to bring about Christian unity. At the solemn opening of the Year of Saint Paul in Rome, Pope Benedict said, "St. Paul reminds us that full communion between all Christians has its foundation in 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism...'" The Year of Saint Paul began on the vigil of the Solemnity of SS. Peter and Paul, June 28, 2008 and will end on June 29, 2009.

What is the significance of June 29?

That is the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. The day commemorates their martyrdom.

On what other days does the Church celebrate the life of Saint Paul?

January 25 is the feast day of The Conversion of Saint Paul. It is the only feast

which commemorates the conversion of a follower of Jesus Christ.

February 16 is the memorial of Saint Paul shipwrecked.

November 18 is the feast of the dedication of the Basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul.

Where is Saint Paul buried?

For many centuries, Saint Paul was believed to be buried under the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls in Rome. Recent archeological work has confirmed this to be true.

How many "letters" (Epistles) did Saint Paul write?

Saint Paul wrote thirteen letters. They are collected in the New Testament. They are:

The Letter to the Romans

The First Letter to the Corinthians

The Second Letter to the Corinthians

The Letter to the Galatians

The Letter to the Ephesians

The Letter to the Philippians

The Letter to the Colossians

The First Letter to the Thessalonians

The Second Letter to the Thessalonians

The First Letter to Timothy

The Second Letter to Timothy

The Letter to Titus

The Letter to Philemon

What is meant by Pauline?

Pauline is the adjective form of Paul. It is used to describe some aspect of the study of St. Paul: Pauline theology, Pauline journeys, Pauline letters, etc.

What is the family background of Saul?

Saul was born into a Jewish family of tent-makers. He was highly educated in the Jewish faith and he spoke and wrote in Greek. His family had been made Roman citizens, so Saul inherited his citizenship from his father. His Jewish name was Saul; his Roman name was Paul. He was a man with a world view of politics and religion.

Why is he called Paul of Tarsus?

Paul was born in Tarsus in present day Turkey.

Why is he called the Apostle to the Gentiles?

Like the twelve apostles, Saint Paul was called by name by the Risen Jesus. Jesus sent him to fulfill a special mission: to bring the Good News to the Gentiles. Paul traveled to many parts of the Roman Empire bringing the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. Some Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah and became Christians, but many did not. Paul had the most success bringing the news of Jesus Christ to those who were not of the Jewish faith.

What was Paul's occupation?

He was a tent-maker. Paul had a skill which was in great demand in those days. As he traveled, he could work as a tent maker to make a living.

Why did Saul persecute the Christians?

Saul was a well-educated and religious Jew. He was a member of the Pharisees. The first Christians were converts from Judaism. The Pharisees saw these Christians as ones who had lost their faith. They were also afraid that they were going to destroy the Jewish faith. Saul was present when the first martyr of the church, Stephen, was stoned to death.

Why was Saul traveling to Damascus?

Following the martyrdom of Stephen, "Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains." (*Acts 9: 1-2*)

What happened on the road to Damascus?

As Paul was riding to Damascus with his companions, a sudden burst of light blinded him and caused him to be thrown from his horse. He "heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He said, 'Who are you, sir?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.'" (*Acts 9:4-6*)

Why is St. Paul called an apostle?

The word apostle refers to the twelve followers of Jesus: Simon Peter, Andrew, Matthew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholemew, the brothers James and John, Simon the Zealot, Jude Thaddeus, James the son of Alpheus and Matthias. Matthias was elected to take the place of Judas Iscariot. While St. Paul did not know Jesus while he lived on earth, he was called by the Risen Jesus in his conversion on the road to Damascus. The term apostle also means missionary. As a missionary, Paul brought the Gospel to all parts of the known world.

Why did Paul write so many letters?

St. Paul traveled widely in the Roman Empire, teaching the Gospel of Christ. His mission was to bring the "Light to the Gentiles" meaning that he preached to and converted many non-Jews in the cities he visited. He completed three missionary journeys. After he had established a community in one place, he would move on to another. He wrote letters to encourage the communities to continue in their belief. Sometimes he wrote to praise the communities, sometimes he had to correct a problem which had arisen in a particular area. Paul's letters today serve to teach us how to follow Christ, how to live "in Christ."

Are Saint Paul's letters recorded in chronological order?

The Pauline letters are not arranged in chronological order. They are arranged in descending order according to length. The Letter to the Romans is the longest of Paul's letters.

Did Paul suffer during his lifetime?

Paul suffered many injustices because he believed in Jesus. In the thirty years of his ministry, he was imprisoned a number of times, he was stoned, he was shipwrecked. Finally, he was beheaded in Rome. He survived so many physical challenges, he must have been a strong man.

What is the meaning of the book and sword held by St. Paul in statues and paintings?

In artwork, St. Paul carries a book which is a sign of the Word of God. He carries the sword as a symbol of his martyrdom. Because Paul was a Roman citizen he had the

"privilege" of being beheaded rather than crucified.

This document was created by the Diocese of Scranton, PA, and used with their permission.