

Prayer to St. Paul

O glorious St. Paul, after persecuting the Church you became by God's grace its most passionate 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.



“Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him.”

1 Corinthians 2:9



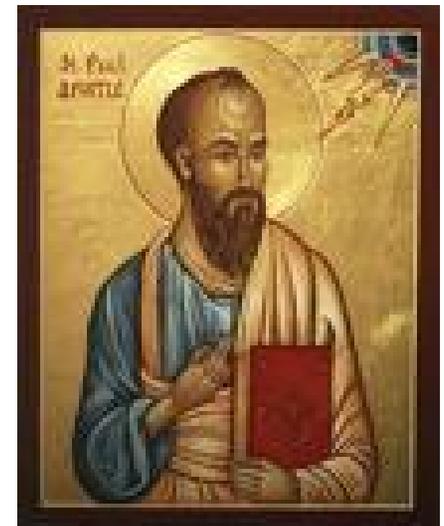
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Evangelization and the Lives of the Saints

St. Paul the Apostle



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“I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

These words which St. Paul wrote to young Timothy sum up an important part of his teaching: to always keep our eyes firmly fixed on the prize, which is Christ Jesus. This year, beginning June 29, 2008, marks a year dedicated by Pope Benedict XVI to St. Paul the Apostle. It is a year in which the Holy Father will no doubt recognize St. Paul for his fidelity to the Gospel and his valiant efforts at evangelization.

Paul, born Saul of Tarsus, was a tent maker by trade and an educated Pharisee. Passionate in his persecution of the young Christian Church, Scripture tells us he tried to destroy it: “entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment.” (Acts 8:3). However, on a trip to Damascus to make more arrests, he was suddenly blinded and heard a voice asking: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” When Saul questioned who it was, he heard the answer: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Saul was struck blind for three days until he was healed by Ananias, a devoted disciple, and baptized. At that point, reborn as Paul, he was overcome by the Holy Spirit, and his passionate nature was henceforth used to preach and proclaim that same Jesus whom he once persecuted.

Today St. Paul is recognized as the most influential preacher, teacher and missionary of his time. His letters are replete with wisdom and encouragement for the young churches he instituted throughout Europe and the Mideast. He made several missionary trips and in the process was beaten, stoned and shipwrecked. His adventures in the book of Acts, and his epistles to various people

and communities, offer a rich source of knowledge which Christians everywhere find applicable to their lives today.

- *“Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear news of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind struggling together for the faith of the gospel...”* (Philippians 1:27). St. Paul was adamant about unity in Christ. He knew that divisions from within could destroy this fledgling church, and constantly warned his people to remember in Whom they were baptized. This is just as true today, when we may be guilty of letting small disagreements hurt our common goal: to live for the Gospel of Christ.
- *“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ... God has so constructed the body so as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.”* (1 Corinthians 12:12, 24-25). In his famous discourse on the Body of Christ, St. Paul teaches us that each member of the Church is important in their own way, and that we should support one another in humility and love. While some people's gifts may be more evident than other's, everyone is necessary in building up the Body of Christ. Let us always remember to recognize and acknowledge the dignity of Christ within each of his followers.
- *“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom...the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.”* (James 3:13, 17-18). In these words about true wisdom, St. Paul

teaches us all to act in a way that honors God with our lives. Every day brings to us some small way in which we can be true to our beliefs: showing some kindness to those we work with, going out of our way to help a family member, making allowances for other's mistakes, etc. In these ways we use small stones of Christian charity to build up the house of God.

- *“Therefore...a thorn in the flesh was given to me... Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’”* (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Often we suffer with trials and problems which we pray for relief from, only to have our prayers seemingly go unanswered. But St. Paul assures us that God always hears our prayers, and will give us the grace to overcome them if we keep our hearts and minds close to Him. Great goodness often comes out of tribulation, although we may not recognize it at the time. If through our weakness and frailty we stay committed to Christ, what a powerful witness that is to the world!
- *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: REJOICE!”* (Philippians 4:4). Through it all, St. Paul reminds us of the joy of belonging to Christ. Whatever life may bring us, if our hearts belong to God and we seek to do His will in this world, we will always have a hopeful spirit of joy and love. Christian joy is not just based in worldly happiness, but in the knowledge that our God knows our situations and loves us through them. St. Paul understood this, being faced with imprisonment, physical abuse and finally martyrdom. Throughout it all, his joy was evident to the world. May ours be also!



**The Year of
St. Paul**

