

Welcome to this 4 week course in honor of the “Year of St. Paul”

- 1<sup>st</sup> of three four-week-blocks,
  - Oct 29 – Nov 19, January, March
- We will cover the Life and three missionary Journey’s of St Paul
- As we walk through Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letters
- **Opening Prayer** [Philippians 2: 3-11](#)

Before we can understand Paul

- we need to understand the Roman world into which Paul was born

Before Julius Caesar was murdered

- he named his grand nephew Octavian to be his heir

After Julius Caesar was murdered on the ides of March,

- the young Octavian proceeded to Rome to gain his inheritance

Once in Power the Roman senate gave Octavian the title of Roman Emperor

- and he became Caesar Augustus

Augustus brought peace and unity to a Roman world that for many years had been locked in civil war

- He brought the famed Pax Romana (Peace of Rome)
  1. by his moderation in dealing with the senate,
  2. by his generosity to the army, and to the people,

He built the Roman roads and sea-ports

- which led to unprecedented economic growth through trade

He brought

1. political security
2. economic prosperity

He reestablished and rebuilt the Roman religion that was desperately in decline

And he convinced the Roman senate to name Julius Caesar a “god”

Augustus constructed the temple of *Divus julius* ("God Julius") on the *Forum Romanum*.

This was an act that consolidated Augustus' power,

- since he was now the son of Divus Julius,

Augustus called himself *Divi filius* ("God's son").

- "I am the son of god"
- He put this on the Roman coins

Augustus built temples all over the Roman Empire for Julius who was now a "god"

- And for his son, Augustus

Herod the Great supported Mark Antony (Augustus' last rival for the throne)

Once Mark Antony was defeated and Augustus was fully in Power

- Herod needed to find a way to get in good with Augustus
- So he dedicated a Temple to Caesar Augustus in Caesarea Philippi
- Calling Augustus the "son of God."

It was in Caesarea Philippi, in **Matthew 16**, that Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?"

- To which Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the **Son of the Living God.**"

Caesar Augustus was the son of a *dead* god

- St. Paul was soon to meet on the road to Damascus **the Son of the Living God**
- And then proclaim Him to all the nations

Ultimately, Paul will be telling a story that could shake the Empire at its foundations

- Because its *foundations* and its *order* are not based on Augustus
- But on Jesus Christ, the true Son of the Living God.

The life of St. Paul can only be correctly understood within the greater story of Jesus Christ and the Church He founded.

### Matthew 28:18-20

- Jesus commissioned the Apostles
- to Go to all nations and tell the Good News

### Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 2 the Holy Spirit fell upon the Apostles at Pentecost
- Peter stands up and preaches with boldness to the Jews and many are converted
  - Acts 2: 37-47

### Acts 3-5 The Apostles preach in Jerusalem

But by Acts 6, The Apostles have to set their preaching aside to “serve tables”

- The Ministry of the word is neglected for their administrative tasks

So they ordain deacons

- Stephen
- Philip

### And the Church was comfortable in Jerusalem

- For the time it seemed as though Christianity was stagnating into a sociological experiment
- comprised only of Jews
- or Greeks who first converted to Judaism then to Christianity.
- **But remember the Great Commissioning of Matthew 28**

Acts 6:7 “Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs”

But many of the unconverted Jews began to dispute with Stephen

Acts 7 Stephen is brought to trial before the High Priest

Acts 7: 51-53 “You stiff-necked people...”

Acts 7: 54-58 Stephen’s martyrdom

Acts 7: 58 – 8:3 Saul was the ring-leader of the martyrdom

Acts 8:1b “And on that day a great persecution broke out”

- And they were all scattered throughout the region,
- *Except the Apostles*

Acts 8:5 Philip goes to preach to the Samaritans

**Acts 8:14-17** As Phillip baptized it was necessary for the Apostles to go out to confer **the sacrament of Confirmation**

- **Only the Bishop can confer this Sacrament**

Acts 8: 26 Then the Holy Spirit sends him south to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to an Ethiopian

New congregations of Christians were formed in many towns

- Acts 8: 14, 25, 40; 9:31, 32, 35 42; 10:44

**The Church was comfortable in Jerusalem**

- The persecution that broke out against them
- Became the **catalyst** that got them to “**Go out to all the nations and tell the Good News**”

**We are comfortable as Catholics**

- Hopefully we do not need a persecution to send us out
- Actually, we have enough non-practicing Catholics who need the Good News first
- Let us not be afraid to invite them back to Mass and the Church and then support them when they return

The first major question facing the Church:

- Could you enter the Church without
  1. first being circumcised
  2. and a follower of the entire Mosaic Law as delineated in Leviticus?

**Acts 10** Peter was the first to face this question

Acts 10:1-2 Cornelius

Acts 10: 3-8 Cornelius' vision

Acts 10: 9-15 Peter's vision of clean and unclean animals

**Cornelius' servants came to Peter and Peter went with them**

Acts 10:25- 48 Holy Spirit comes to the Gentiles

But the *vision* and *event* of Cornelius did not solve the problem

- Because Cornelius was a proselyte,
- a non-Jew that had previously accepted the Jewish religion.

**Still, there prevailed the idea that**

- one had to enter the Church through the door of the synagogue.
- This was the position of the “**Circumcision party**”
- They will be Paul's arch-enemies

Even the early Christian community believed that

- the door of the synagogue was the portal through which the nations must enter the Church of Christ.
- They had not yet learned that God had opened another door to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

## Acts 8 and 9      Paul

### Who is Paul?

We know very little of Paul before Acts 8

- He was a Roman citizen (which would have made him part of the aristocracy of any provincial town)
- His family was from Tarsus in south-eastern Turkey
- He was Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin
- A Pharisee
- Paul studied under Rabbi Gamaliel, a leading authority in the Sanhedrin in the mid first century.
  - He was the grandson of the great Jewish teacher Hillel the Elder,

In Philippians Paul tells us that before his conversion to Christ he was

- As to zeal a persecutor of the Church
- As to righteousness under the law - blameless

### Acts 7: 58 – 8:3

- Saul gave consent to Stephen's death
  - Saul gave authorization
- He was the Leader of the Persecution
- "Paul laid waste to the Church"

Acts 9: 1-2 Paul requests letters for Damascus in Syria

### Why Damascus?

- More Jews lived in Persia than in the Holy Land
- Because of the Babylonian Captivity
- Up to 40,000 Jews lived in Damascus
- Damascus was the gateway to Persia
  - "We have to stop this Christian infection before it spreads through the Gateway of Damascus and travels to Persia"



Why does Paul go to Arabia for a number of years?

Isaiah 42:1 & 11; 49: 1-2, 6

- Kedar was a tribe in Arabia

Galatians 4:25 Sinai very possibly is a Mountain in Saudi Arabia near the gulf of Aqaba not in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula

Paul goes to Mt. Sinai to pray and to discern

13-17 years go by before Paul's first missionary journey

- prayer
- discernment
- formation

Acts 11:19- 26 13-17 years have gone by

- Barnabas takes Paul to Antioch in Syria

Acts 12:1-17

- Herod Kills James the brother of John
- Peter is arrested and saved by Angels
- John-Mark is introduced

Acts 13 A.D. 47

Acts 13: 1-3

Barnabas was the leader of the Church in Antioch

Acts 13:2

- Set them apart for the "work"
- In Greek – "Liturgia"
- Set them apart for the Liturgy

They "lay hands on them"

- They are ordained

## Acts 13:4

- Being sent out by the Holy Spirit they departed from Seleucia (the port for Antioch) and sailed for
- Cyprus,
- then to Paphos,
- Perga,
- and over the Taurus Mountains to Antioch in Pisidia
- where we will pick up next week with Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey

## Why was Saul's name changed to Paul?

The Bible does not tell us how or when Saul's name was changed to Paul.

Luke simply identifies Saul as the one who is also called Paul.

- **Acts 13:9** "Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him."

There are two possible explanations for this name change.

1 - The first is found in the first book of Timothy when the Lord informs Saul that he would become an apostle to the Gentiles.

- 1 Timothy 2:7 "For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am speaking the truth in Christ, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

Paul may have converted his Jewish name to a Greek equivalent, so that the Gentiles would accept him more readily.

2 - The second possibility may be that a new identity reflects a new life.

After Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road he was a new man with a new heart.

The old man with the old beliefs were a thing of the past. Paul may have believed that this new man with a new heart required a new name.

## Conclusion

Paul encountered Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God  
And his life is forever changed

We have the opportunity to encounter the Living God every day

- Meditation
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Mass
- Throughout the day
- Seek an encounter with the Living God every day

**Next week** – Paul's first missionary journey Acts 13-14; Galatians 1-2