

ST. PAUL, APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES · Paul was known as "Saul", born in Tarsus, a city in modern Turkey. Early on, he made a living as a tentmaker. He was a Roman citizen who was well educated in Jewish law. Saul hated Christians and took part in persecuting them. He even assisted at the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

One day, as he was traveling to Damascus to arrest yet another group of Christians, Saul was struck down to the ground by a blinding light. He heard a voice from Heaven say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you?" asked Saul. The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

As Saul had been struck blind, his companions led him by hand into the city. He began to study and learn about Jesus, and was then baptized. At once, he regained his sight and took the Christian name of Paul. He then started to preach the word of Jesus to the pagan world and became a missionary throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Paul also wrote many letters, called "epistles", to Christian communities. He considered the people of the communities where he traveled to his family, and showed his love and concern for them by filling his letters with hope, encouragement, and instruction on how to stay strong in their faith in Christ. Much of what Paul wrote in his 13 epistles in the Bible is used in our Liturgy of the Mass today.

After many years of traveling and preaching, Paul reached Rome where he met the Pope, Peter. Paul was taken prisoner and beheaded in the year 64A.D. He showed great faith and courage in his life as he opened his heart and mind to the love of Jesus Christ.

