



Year of Saint Paul

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First in a Series of Reflections on the Life of Saint Paul
for the Jubilee Year of St. Paul

June 28, 2008 - June 29, 2009

On June 28, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall to celebrate First Vespers for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. During his homily Pope Benedict announced, "We shall be dedicating a special Jubilee Year to the Apostle Paul from 28 June 2008 to 29 June 2009, on the occasion of the biennial of his birth . . ."

When I think of St. Paul I think of the numerous aspects of his life and ministry that have echoed throughout the history of the Church. The name of St. Paul brings about thoughts of conversion, zeal, missionary travels, teaching, writing and martyrdom. He has had and continues to have a powerful influence on the Church and in particular on those of us involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

The Conversion of St. Paul is very personal to all of us whose lives have been changed by the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." Many of us experienced some sort of conversion. For some it was a dramatic experience like St. Paul on the road to Damascus that awakened a dormant faith and dramatically turned lives around. For others it was a deepening of Faith with new insight and experiences of God's active presence in their lives in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Our conversion united us in a special way with St. Paul. We found ourselves hungering for the Word of God and very often we turned to God's Word as written by St. Paul. His words instruct, inspire and encourage us to grow, mature and live our faith with a continued spirit of renewal and a desire for increased zeal.

St Paul was entrusted with the task of writing about the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These writings help us to see that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the Church at Pentecost are still present in the Church today. We read of Paul's journeys and teachings and realize that these gifts were not limited to a particular people in a particular place at a particular time. Paul proclaimed these gifts of the Holy Spirit wherever he went. And he proclaimed them for all time. How we rejoice at realizing how gifted and blessed we are when we claim the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

This year of St. Paul is an opportunity for us to reflect on the gifts that have been poured out on us. If we have begun to take them for granted we have this time to rediscover and reclaim them. We can study anew the life and writings of this great Apostle, Missionary, Writer and Martyr. This Jubilee Year of St. Paul can be a year of renewal for us if we take advantage of it and enter into the spirit of this Jubilee.

During the Year of St. Paul the National Service Committee is producing a series of reflections that will examine the various aspects of the life and ministry of St. Paul. These are intended to help us as we celebrate this Jubilee year of St. Paul. Hopefully they will be a means to help all of us to enter more deeply into the gift of St. Paul and continue to grow in the Life in the Spirit.