



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Paul, Apostle of Christ Jesus—Part II

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Three Missionary Journeys

Paul's extensive travels are traditionally clustered by historians into what they call his "three missionary journeys."

In the first, he went to the island of Cyprus, several cities in Asia Minor, back to Antioch, then to Jerusalem and Antioch again. Typically, in each place he preached first in the local Jewish synagogue, then to the Gentiles of the area.

In his second journey, Paul returned to the sites in Asia Minor where he had preached before to check up on the new Christian communities he had established. This strategy of planting new local churches, moving on to preach in other cities and then following up again (through visits or letters) became the pattern for his ministry.

Next, going north to preach in Galatia and Phrygia, Paul crossed over into Europe for the first time, preaching in Macedonia and the Greek cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth. Eventually, Paul preached in the great city of Ephesus, the most important Roman city in Asia Minor.

Though he made plans to preach in Spain, we don't

know for sure whether he ever made it that far west.

Pauline Epistles

The names of Paul's biblical epistles reflect some of the locales we've noted: 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These letters provided the young churches he had founded with instruction, correction, inspiration and encouragement. Paul also wrote the biblical letter to the Romans, though the church there was not one he himself had planted.

In addition, some of the biblical epistles of Paul were written to individuals, such as 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. (Scholars have debated whether some of the letters attributed to him might, in fact, have been written by another author using his name. We assume here that the biblical books bearing his name are his work, in keeping with the Church's ancient tradition.)

Paul wrote more books of the Bible than any other author. Not surprisingly, then, his writing came to have tremendous influence on the Church, not only in his day but in every succeeding generation that has heard, read and meditated on the Scriptures he penned.

Final Journeys

After an extended stay in Ephesus, the apostle went to several more cities before

heading back to Jerusalem at last. By that time, he had endured remarkable suffering for the sake of his mission. In addition to multiple imprisonments, he survived numerous other challenges and adversities.

"Five times," he told the Christians at Corinth, "at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure" (2 Cor 11:24-27).

In Jerusalem Paul's preaching once again stirred up trouble from the enemies of the Church. He was arrested, and over a period of two years in prison, he was brought before a Jewish court, a Jewish puppet king and two successive Roman governors. In the end he was shipped off to Rome for trial there. The journey by sea to the imperial capital was a nightmare, with storms, a shipwreck and a winter spent stranded at Malta. Once in

Rome, Paul remained there for two years under house arrest, though he had the liberty to preach and to teach those who came to visit him.

Missionary and Martyr

Scripture doesn't tell us about St. Paul's death. But an ancient and reliable tradition reports that he was martyred under the Roman emperor Nero, probably sometime after the summer of the year 64 — perhaps in the same persecution of Christians when St. Peter was crucified. Paul was beheaded and then buried on the Via Ostiensis at a place now marked by the basilica of St. Paul-outside-the-Walls (of Rome).

Down through the ages, the traditional image of St. Paul has shown him holding an open book of Scripture and a sword. These symbols remind us not only of his courageous labors in planting churches, but also his invaluable role in providing the Church with, as he once called it, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17). In this Year of St. Paul, we do well to remember him with gratitude, and to take up that "sword" once more for the spiritual battle that still rages.

*by Paul Thigpen, Ph.D.
from Our Sunday Visitor
www.osv.com*



Saint of the Day: St. Blase (d. 316)

Tuesday, February 3, is the Feast of St Blase.

We know more about the devotion to St. Blase by Christians around the world than we know about the saint himself. His feast is observed as a holy day in some Eastern Churches. The Council of Oxford, in 1222, prohibited servile labor in England on Blase’s feast day. The Germans and Slavs hold him in special honor and for decades many United States Catholics have sought the annual St. Blase blessing for their throats

We know that Bishop Blase was martyred in his episcopal city of Sebastea, Armenia, in 316. The legendary Acts of St. Blase were written 400 years later. According to them Blase was a good bishop, working hard to encourage the spiritual and physical health of his people. Although the Edict of Toleration (311), granting freedom of worship in the Roman Empire, was already five years old, persecution still raged in Armenia. Blase was apparently forced to flee to the back country. There he lived

as a hermit in solitude and prayer, but made friends with the wild animals. One day a group of hunters seeking wild animals for the amphitheater stumbled upon Blase’s cave. They were first surprised and then frightened. The bishop was kneeling in prayer surrounded by patiently waiting wolves, lions and bears.

As the hunters hauled Blase off to prison, the legend has it, a mother came with her young son who had a fish bone lodged in his throat. At Blase’s command the child was able to cough up the bone.

Agricolaus, governor of Cappadocia, tried to persuade Blase to sacrifice to pagan idols. The first time Blase refused, he was beaten. The next time he was suspended from a tree and his flesh torn with iron combs or rakes. (English wool combers, who used similar iron combs, took Blase as their patron. They could easily appreciate the agony the saint underwent.) Finally he was beheaded.

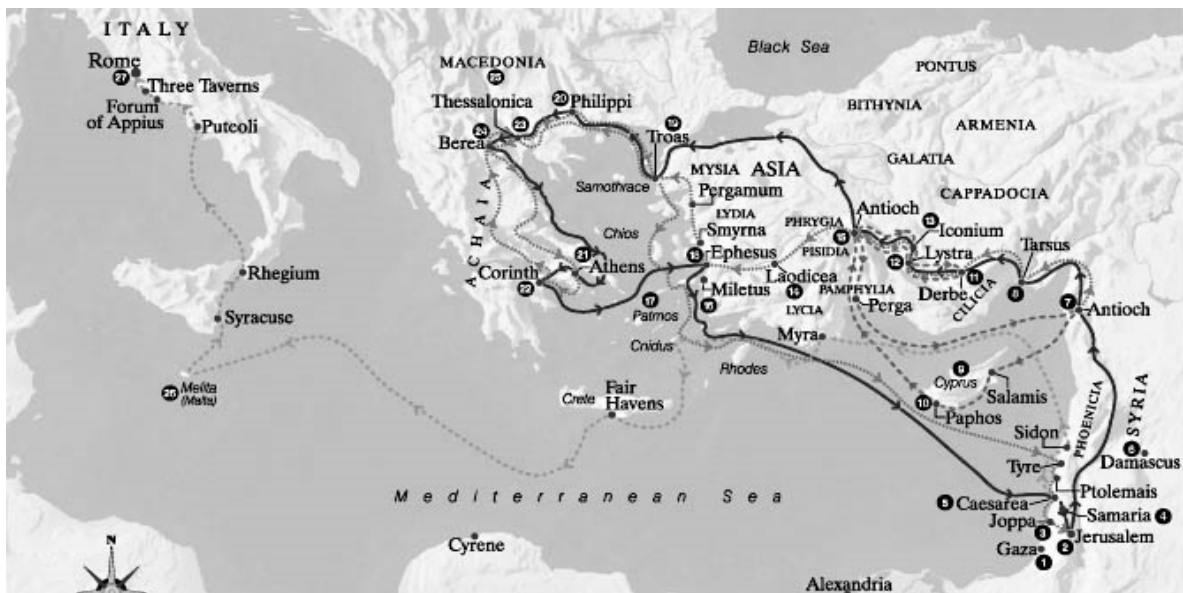
Comment:

Four centuries give ample opportunity for fiction to creep in with fact. Who can be sure how accurate Blase’s biographer was? But biographical details are not essential. Blase is seen as one more example of the power those have who give themselves entirely to Jesus. As Jesus told his apostles at the Last Supper, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). With faith we can follow the lead of the Church in asking for Blase’s protection.

Quote:

“Through the intercession of St. Blase, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from ailments of the throat and from every other evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Blessing of St. Blase).

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“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.