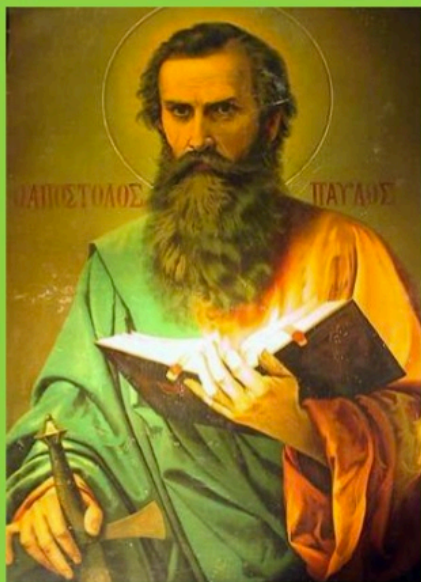


# RE Newsletter

## St John the Evangelist Parent Newsletter



### THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL, THE APOSTLE

## In the Footsteps of St Paul

In the last newsletter last year, we started our journey learning about St Paul. We will now continue this journey with Paul's First Missionary journey.

### Paul's First Missionary Journey

This can be found in Acts 13:1-14:28. The main route of this journey was through Cyprus and Turkey (Asia Minor). It encompassed about 2,253 km.



### Important Information

Welcome to Week 4 & 5

### Opening School Mass

This Friday - 21 February, we are having our Opening School Mass. It will be celebrated in the Church at 10 am. All are welcome to come.

### Ash Wednesday

Wednesday next week is Ash Wednesday - 26 February.

Primary will be attending Mass in the Church at 12 midday. You are more than welcome to join us as we remember the First Day of Lent.

### Sacrament of First Holy Communion

This is for children who have made their Sacrament of Reconciliation. There is a Parent Information Evening on **Wednesday 6 May 2020** that all parents must attend if they wish their child to be enrolled in the First Holy Communion program. It will commence at **7 pm** in the Church.

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution ... travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they send Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad ... Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and bought him to Antioch. So for a whole year, Barnabas and Saul taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

This Bible extract brings us back from the last newsletter where Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul (referred to in this extract above as Saul, his previous name). Also John Mark joined Barnabas and Paul as a helper on this journey.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria) with a population of over 500,000.

This first Missionary journey took place between 46 and 49 AD. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Both Alexandria (in Egypt) and Antioch became key centres in the developing Christian world. Antioch's role in Christian history from Paul's time onwards was particularly interesting. Some scholars suggest that the Gospel of Matthew was written in and for the church in Antioch. Certainly there were many features that suggested this Gospel was written within an urban, rather than a rural environment (hence its references to 'towns' rather than 'villages' in Chapters 10-13). Moreover, alone of the four Gospel, Matthew wrote that 'news about Jesus spread all over Syria' (Matt 4:24). This probably referred to the towns and villages of





northern Galilee and the Golan Heights (this area is at the top of Israel, right on the border with Lebanon), towards Damascus (Syria) (all within the Roman Province of Syria-Palestina), but it certainly showed an interest in Syria - which would fit with a Gospel emanating from the provincial capital in Syrian Antioch.

## Cyprus

Paul's first missionary journey out of Antioch in Syria (see large map below showing a wider scale), was to the scenic island of Cyprus. This was probably around AD 47. Paul, Barnabas and young Mark found a cargo ship travelling to Cyprus and went on board.

We can imagine their feelings as they ventured out into the unknown and as the mountains of Cyprus (some 145 kms away) came into view. For Barnabas, this was not new. He has travelled the triangle between Cyprus and Jerusalem and Antioch often. For him, this was home. For Mark, the feelings would have been quite different. Paul had questions too. This was the first night in open sea.

The three men in the boat, each with their slightly different hopes and fears, but joined by a single shared commitment, finally alighted the boat and headed into the town of Salamis.

## Arrival in Salamis

Cyprus played a vital role in the trade routes of the ancient world. Salamis is the main town on the east coast. By the first century AD like most Cypriot cities, it had a small but recognisable Jewish community. For the three travellers, who landed in the docks, the synagogue was the obvious first port of call. In this we see the first clear example of what will become a common theme as we follow Paul on this travels: his first visit in any place was always to the local synagogue. There were some obvious, practical reasons for this: as Jews themselves, this was a natural point of connection. As a visiting rabbi, Paul would regularly be invited to address the worshippers as a matter of courtesy - just as happened to Jesus himself when he made *his* visit to Nazareth's synagogue.

Paul proclaimed the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues for a while. There is no comment in the Bible on how the synagogues responded to this preaching. Nor do we know how many of those attending these places of worship were already believers of Jesus. In this sense, Salamis was not quite 'virgin territory'.

## Onwards to Paphos

In due course, the three travellers decided to move on. Perhaps on mules or donkeys, perhaps on foot, they travelled approximately 160 km through the whole island. Their goal was the capital of the new Roman

province of Cyprus - Nea Paphos. Once arrived, they headed straight for the local synagogue. At this time in Cyprus, the governor of the area was known as the 'proconsul'. He heard of the news of Paul and invited them to his residence to speak. This was very significant because within just 15 years of Jesus himself being sentenced to death under a Roman governor in Jerusalem, here was another Roman governor responding positively to the message about him through Paul. Here too was the Roman Empire beginning to take note of a new, distinct teaching from within Judaism - and the first signs were promising!



## Back to Asia Minor

In late summer of 46 AD, Paul, Barnabas and Mark set sail from Paphos towards the coast of Asia Minor. By heading west in Cyprus across to Paphos, they had effectively committed themselves already to landing back on the mainland much further to the west of Paul's native Cilicia. Hence they came to Pamphylia (see map above - see Pamphylia in light orange and Cilicia in purple).

Pamphylia was the Roman province on the south coast of Asia Minor, located on the fairly narrow coastal plain to the south of the Taurus Mountains. Perga was a large harbour city - the capital of the region.

Even though they were back in Paul's so-called 'backyard' (being near Tarsus), this adventure into new pastures was precisely the cutting-edge frontier-style missionary work that Paul had been waiting for. At last, he was genuinely hitting 'virgin territory'. For, unlike in Cyprus, the good news about Jesus had probably not yet reached the synagogues here in Pamphylia.

But 'one man's meat is another man's poison'. Spare a thought for young John Mark: for what was thrilling Paul's heart was probably inwardly killing Mark. Antioch, then Cyprus - these had been challenges enough for the young man from Jerusalem. Arriving now in Pamphylia he was two, if not three, stages removed from his home and family. At some point, it all got to be too much, and he decided to quit.

## John Mark's Desertion

From Luke's account in Acts, we actually know very little about what missionary work went on in Pamphylia. It is chiefly remembered in Acts as the place of John Marks' desertion. He was going back to Jerusalem.

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Next newsletter, we will continue Paul's first missionary journey together.

In the July school holidays last year, I went on a pilgrimage through Greece, Turkey and Malta following in the footsteps of St Paul. This was with Harvest Pilgrimages and it was an amazing journey. I hope you enjoy learning about St Paul as much as I did.

## A Little Funny

Did Eve ever have a date with Adam? Nope – just an apple.

