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*Second in the Series*

*Division Of  
Evangelization and  
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of  
Baltimore*

**Being a Disciple**

It is very difficult to pinpoint with extreme accuracy specific days, dates and times in the lives of most people in the early years of the Church. Paul is no exception. By comparing hints left to us by canonical and apocryphal writers, we can conjecture an event. For example, we can approximate that Paul’s conversion happened about 36A.D. We also know that Paul began his First Missionary Journey around 46A.D. and finished with a visit to Jerusalem at approximately 49A.D. So where was he for ten years?

The word *disciple* can easily be translated as *learner*. Paul as we all are was also for a time a disciple. Someone who took the time to learn about Jesus and his teaching. We know from a variety of sources such as *Acts* and other writings that Paul spent time in Damascus (where he was heading when he was converted and from where he fled in a basket from the walls in 39A.D.), in Jerusalem, in Tarsus (from 40-44A.D.) and in Antioch (which he used as a base for his missionary journeys.) Paul himself in his letters tells us he spent some time in *Arabia*. Being a very intelligent person it would have been natural for Paul to listen to the stories of the Apostles, to ask questions about what Jesus said and did, to spend time in small faith communities sharing stories of faith and life. From this he readied himself to take on the task he says was given to him by Jesus, to be an apostle to the Gentiles.



**Facts About Paul**

So many stories and legends have grown up around Paul. What do we know for sure about him. Much of what is fact we know from Paul himself. Throughout his letters he tells us that he was a faithful Jew, a Roman citizen, “one who never knew Jesus”, and a Pharisee (Phil 3:5). He also tells us that he was a small, physically weak person, a student of Greek philosophy and a child of the Diaspora. As a tradesman we know that he was a tentmaker. We don’t know much about his personal life but we

do know that he had a sister and as a Pharisee and a good Jew of the Tribe of Benjamin was probably married although we hear nothing of his wife. We can conjecture that he probably came from a middle class family of comfortable means if he was able to go to school and study in Jerusalem. He was a student of the great Jewish Teacher Gamaliel.

### Name

We have come to believe that there were almost two persons, one Saul and the other Paul. That Saul ceased to be after his conversion on the Road to Damascus and became the person of Paul. It is easy for us to think that way since the story of Paul's conversion is so dramatic that we presume that like Abram and Abraham there must be some way to recognize this change. The truth is, however, that the same person always had both names, Saul being his Jewish name and Paul being his Roman name. Even in the New Testament writings the names are used at times interchangeably. Being born in the Roman "free city" of Tarsus, he would have been registered as Paul by his parents. At the same time he probably was named by his Jewish family as Saul.

In *Acts* 13:9 it says, "And Saul, whose other name is Paul..." . After this passage he is almost exclusively called Paul for the rest of the book.



### Reflection:

Read Acts of the Apostles 9:1-19

1. When and how did Jesus first get your attention? Was it in so dramatic fashion like with Saul or was it some quieter, more natural form?
2. Who has played the role of Ananias in your life? Who first led you to having a relationship with Jesus? Who helps you today to be a good disciple of God?
3. Who is God calling you to reach out to help in their faith journey?
4. What changes has knowing Jesus brought into your life? Have other people responded to those changes? Do they even see the changes in you?

### The Letters of Paul

After spending time in the various communities in which he established "churches", Paul continued to teach through letters. We have 13 letters in the New Testament and there may have been more that through time were lost. The earliest of these was written to the Thessalonians in approximately 50-51 A.D. It is through these letters that much of what we understand of how to live the Christian life and what we believe as Christians is preserved. Paul teaches and answers questions for the communities who were faced with the newness of living as followers of Jesus. Remember they were the first and had no one to model for them what this was all about. At times you can read between the lines the frustration of Paul and at times he is outright scolding them. He always did so as a loving "father" and as one caring for them. His writings still do that for us today! **Next Issue: How Paul wrote his letters and what's in them!**

### Prayer (based on Ephesians 3:16-21)

Father, I pray that out of your glorious riches you will strengthen me with power through your Spirit, so that Jesus may dwell in my heart through faith. I pray that I, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of you. To you who is able to do immeasurably more than all I ask or imagine be all glory and honor forever and ever. Amen!