



SAINT PAUL 2000 YEARS LATER

**A conference on the current relevance of Paul's teachings
in the catechesis of Pope Benedict XVI**

Speakers: Msgr. Lorenzo ALBACETE—Theologian, Author, Columnist
Daniel Cardinal DINARDO—Archbishop of Galveston-Houston
Mario PAREDES— American Bible Society, Presidential Liaison

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Crossroads: Good evening and welcome to all of you. On behalf of Crossroads I would like to thank The American Bible Society and Mr. Mario Paredes in particular, as well as our very distinguished guests.

On June 28, 2008 the Pope, in his Homily for the inauguration of the Pauline year, pointed out that Paul's faith coincides with "the experience of being loved by Jesus Christ in a very personal way: Christ did not face death for something anonymous but rather for love of him - of Paul [...] Paul's faith is being struck by the love of Jesus Christ, a love that overwhelms him to his depths and transforms him. His faith is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world. His faith is the impact of God's love in his heart. Thus, this same faith was love for Jesus Christ."

The Pope went on to say that St. Paul's experience is precisely what defines the Church, because "the Church is not an association that desires to promote a specific cause. In her there is no question of a cause. In her it is a matter of the person of Jesus Christ, who, also as the Risen One, remained "flesh." He has "flesh and bones" (Lk 24: 39)..." Part of these flesh and bones, of course, is comprised of the college of bishops, those who Christ has chosen to make himself present as teacher and shepherd of His Church, like He did with Paul.

And to guide us tonight, alongside Monsignor Albacete, who is the Chairman of the Crossroads' Advisory Board, we are very honored to have here with us one of the most distinguished members of our episcopate, Cardinal DiNardo. I leave to Mario Paredes, who serves the American Bible Society as Presidential Liaison on the United Nations Initiative, Roman Catholic Ministry and Hispanic/Latino Projects (and who is also a member of the Crossroads Advisory Board) the task of introducing our first speaker, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, and starting the conference.

Paredes: Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete, a columnist for *The New York Times*, is a physicist by training. He holds the degree in Space Science and Applied Physics as well as a Master's Degree in Sacred Theology from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He holds a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome. He is co-founder and has been a professor at the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC. He has taught at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, NY, and from 1996 to 1997 served as President of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. He is a columnist for the Italian weekly *Tempi*, has written for *The New Yorker*, and has been Advisor on Hispanic Affairs to the US National Council

of Catholic Bishops. He is the Responsible of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in the United States and Canada. Msgr. Albacete resides in Yonkers, NY. Dear Lorenzo, please...

Albacete: Hi. After hearing my curriculum vitae, I have decided to change my name to Msgr. Sotomayor. Mario has emphasized the empathy that I have...

Well, I don't really have much to say at all as a matter of fact. What we really want to hear tonight are the words of His Eminence.

I begin with a quote. There are many quotes to avoid to have to put down my own thoughts:

At the end of the second millennium [now the beginning of the next millennium] the Church finds itself in the region of its original spread, in Europe, in a profound crisis, based on the crisis provoked by the Church's claim to know truth. This crisis has a double dimension: above all there is asked with ever-growing insistence whether it is correct at the deepest level to apply the notion of truth to religion—in other words, whether man has been given the capacity to know the truth of God and divine things. Modern man finds himself much more at home in the Buddhist parable of the elephant and the blind man.

You might remember it. The king brings together all the men born blind of a particular city and brings in an elephant, allowing them to touch the animal which they had never seen and saying, "This animal is called an elephant. Describe an elephant to me." Each one offered a description based on the part of the animal they had touched. They fought among each other defending their versions of what the elephant is like, while the king laughed. Religious disputes are like that fight between those blind men because in front of the Mystery of God we are all born blind.

For contemporary thought, Christianity is absolutely in no more favorable position with respect to any other religion in its claim to the truth... This generalized skepticism before the claim to truth by Christianity is ultimately due to the questions that modern science has raised concerning the origin and the content of Christianity. Evolution theory seems to have made irrelevant the doctrine of creation; what is known about man's origin appears to have set aside or made impossible the doctrine of original sin; exegetical criticism relativizes the figure of Jesus, and questions his filial self-consciousness; the origins of the Church in the historical Jesus appears dubious, and so forth. On the other hand, the end of metaphysics has made problematic the philosophical foundation of Christianity, and modern historical criticism has cast an ambiguous light over its historical beginnings. It is thus easy to reduce the content of Christianity to symbols, not attributing to them any more truth than that of the myths characteristic of the history of religion, considering them as a modality of the religious experience to be humbly placed at the side of all others. In this sense it is possible to still consider oneself a Christian in as much as one always favors those forms of expression typical of Christianity, or, for example, the system of values and cultural traditions associated with Christianity.

These words are the words of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in a publication by the editor of *Micro-Mega*, an Italian journal dedicated to the promotion and defense of atheist humanism, on the occasion of a public debate between Ratzinger and its editor, the atheist philosopher Paolo Flores d'Arcais, at the Quirino Theatre in Rome on September 21, 2000. Their discussion treated such non-controversial subjects as truth, faith, atheism, tolerance, Enlightenment, natural rights, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Pascal, secularism, reason, abortion, Pinochet, the Church asking for forgiveness, and so forth.

I read to you this extensive quote because I believe that it helps us understand why Pope Benedict XVI thought it important to declare this “Year of St. Paul” that has brought us together again tonight. The Pauline year is important, he believes, because it helps us return to the beginning of Christianity as the only way to respond to the crisis of faith faced by the Church at the present time. This is the first point I want to understand and to underline. We must return to the beginning. I have not found any place where Pope Benedict does not in one way or another return to this point. We must look at what happened when Christianity began and how it began.

In the Pope’s homily at the beginning of the Pauline year on 28 June 2008, the Holy Father insisted that St. Paul, precisely as a “teacher of the Gentiles” in his time must also be seen as “our teacher, an Apostle and herald of Jesus Christ for us too.” And he said: “This is why I chose to establish the special ‘Pauline Year,’ in order to listen to him and learn from him today, as our teacher, the ‘faith and the truth’ in which the reasons for unity among Christ’s disciples are rooted.”

Ironically, in the discussion with the atheist Flores d’Arcais who first appeals to St. Paul at the beginning of his discussion with Cardinal Ratzinger, d’Arcais appeals to St. Paul to support his argument that the Christian insistence on knowing the truth of reality, the Christian insistence of faith as a form of knowledge of reality poses a serious threat to religious liberty. For as long as the faith of Christians is understood only as a source of values, he argues, a fruitful dialogue between believers and non-believers can take place; it is possible, welcome and necessary. But when faith claims to be a certain knowledge of the real, a way of knowing reality, then it will necessarily, intrinsically pose a threat to the religious liberty of non-believers and indeed to other non-Christian believers. Even St. Paul, he argues, realized that faith as a way to know reality was a scandal to reason.

A faith that recognizes this poses no problem because such a faith will never seek to be imposed on non-believers; it will only seek respect of its rights to be practiced by its adherents. However, he says, “if the Catholic faith claims to be the fulfillment and complement to reason, of that which must characterize man, the risk that it will seek to be imposed on others will be inevitable.”

In his reply, Cardinal Ratzinger recognizes the importance of St. Paul’s view of faith as a “scandal.” This “scandal” is true, he says, and it is present in all generations, including today. But Paul, in spite of this, is the same one who preached at the Areopagus, the center of culture of his time, and engaged in a dialogue with the philosophers whom he also quotes favorably. His audience indeed was those pagans who had come to see the religion of the Jews as the “rational religion.” During the time of the crisis in the religion of the pagans, the religion of the Jews presented itself as “the authentic religion not invented by philosophers, but truly born from the heart of man and the light of the one God and which was in profound correspondence with the desires of the human heart.”

This correspondence with the demands of reason is precisely at the center of St. Paul’s argument in his preaching and teaching to non-Christians, and it is this above all that St. Paul teaches us, the gentiles of today. The Christian faith, he teaches us, cannot be reduced to a system of values, nor to religious experiences expressed in symbols and myths. The Christian faith offers itself as corresponding perfectly to the demands of the heart in every human being, including the demands of reason, but it is this precisely because of its conviction about the identity, mystery, and mission of Jesus Christ. This comes first. The following of Christ, indeed the belonging to Christ as the basis of our identity (“It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”) is at the beginning of any value system or religious experience associated with Christianity. And that is why tolerance and the Christian faith are not incompatible, why the temptation to political power is totally absent, because this conviction about Christ that occurs first is pure grace, it is not a self-constructed experience; it is an experience of being loved unconditionally, awakening us to this love and moving us to love in the same way. Love cannot be imposed. Freedom is an inseparable part of authentic love. For this reason, because of his

unexpected, “all-surpassing” encounter with the love that is God in Christ, St. Paul was convinced that faith can and must appeal to reason, even as it goes beyond what can be evident to reason (such as the resurrection of Jesus and the meaning of his death—both mentioned at the Areopagus.) In Ratzinger’s words, “As I understand St. Paul, what is at stake is love, and love is not against reason; it exceeds reason.”

That is why in his homily opening the Pauline Year, Pope Benedict XVI summarizes Paul’s teaching to us today in terms of three texts in which the specific character of Paul’s faith appear.

The first text is Galatians 2:20: “I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

“All of Paul’s actions,” said the Holy Father, “begin from this center. His faith is the experience of being loved by Jesus Christ in a very personal way. It is the awareness of the fact that Christ did not face death for something anonymous, but rather for love of him—of Paul—and that, as the Risen One, he still loves him. In other words, Christ gave himself for him. Paul’s faith is being struck by the love of Jesus Christ, a love that overwhelms him to his depths and transforms him. His faith is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world. His faith is the impact of God’s love in his heart. Thus, this same faith became love for Jesus Christ...For him, the truth that he experienced in his encounter with the Risen One was worth everything, above all the persecution and suffering that it brought him. But what most deeply motivated him was being loved by Jesus Christ and the desire to communicate this love to others...It is only on this basis that we can understand the concepts on which his proclamation was founded.”

The Pope gives as an example the concept of freedom. He says, “The experience of being loved by Christ had opened his eyes to the truth and the way of an authentic human existence. It was this experience that embraced everything. Paul was free as a man loved by God who, by virtue of God, was able to love together with him. This love then became the ‘law’ of his life, and in this very way, the freedom of his life. He speaks and acts motivated by the responsibility of love. Here freedom and responsibility are indivisibly united.”

The second text in the Pope’s homily is Acts 9: 4f, in which Jesus identifies Himself with the Church being persecuted by Saul. “Jesus identifies with the Church as a single subject,” says the Pope. The encounter with Jesus Christ, and his love, his sacrifice of self for him, as totally and deeply personal as it was, was also, at the same time, an encounter with the Church, with the community of believers, the experience of belonging to the community. His life from then on, his very identity, was to be henceforth totally dependent on this belonging to the Church. The Church is not simply the continuation of the cause of Jesus on earth; the Church cannot be defined in terms of values or cultural expressions. “The Church is not an association that desires to promote a specific cause. In her there is no question of a cause. In her it is a matter of the person of Jesus Christ, who also as the Risen One remains ‘flesh,’ with flesh and blood. Christ and his followers become one...in the new world of the Resurrection.”

This too is a crucial lesson for us today, not to allow the Church to be reduced to an ethical or religious institution that seeks political power, but to show that freedom and tolerance are found precisely in our belonging to the Church, whether morally we are good or bad Christians—coherence comes later—first comes the event of what baptism brings about in our humanity now in this life, as sheer grace, as sheer love, in this world.

Finally, the third text which Pope Benedict refers to in 2 Timothy 1:8 encouraging Timothy (Paul now being towards the end of his life) to bear all the hardships and suffering which faith entails. For Paul, the call to be the teacher of the Gentiles, his vocation “is, at the same time, and intrinsically a call to suffering in communion with Christ who redeemed us through his Passion. In a world in which falsehood is powerful, the truth is paid for with suffering...There is no love without suffering—without the suffering of renouncing oneself, of the transformation and purification of self for this freedom. “Where there is nothing worth suffering for, even life

loses its value.” It was this suffering, argues the Holy Father, that made Paul “credible as a teacher of the truth who did not seek his own advantage.”

In the latest collection of lectures, speeches, notes by the Pope, (one of the advantages of being Pope is they publish everything) he returns once again to the need to define exactly the core of the Christian life, to identify exactly what makes us Christians in this time so reminiscent of the beginning of the history of Christianity.

In the speech given to the Congregation of the Clergy on March 16, 2009, the Pope had insisted that “in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Logos, of the Word—that is, in the fact that God became man like us, the content as well as the method of the proclamation of the Christian faith are included.” They cannot be separated. Method and content cannot be separated. This is what we need to learn from St. Paul—not just the content of his doctrines and his teachings and his theology and his value system, but the method of knowledge and proclamation inherent to the Incarnation itself. Without the method revealed in the Incarnation, the content of the mystery remains an abstraction that changes nothing and can be easily reduced to ideology. Without the revealed content, the method becomes a human construction at the service of our search for influence and power.

In his latest book, the Pope deals with this concern by seeking to discover what we mean by belief in God and what makes us Christians. His answer: love. It is a matter of love. Again and again the Holy Father backs up this claim summarized succinctly as such: “Whoever loves is a Christian.” The method is uncovered, discovered by the very dynamic of love. But if this is so, why is faith needed? Why do we need to adhere to the doctrines of Christianity? This answer is equally simple: because ultimately we are incapable of authentic love. Something must happen to us, awaken us to the reality of this unconditional love; something must happen to us first, namely the experience of an encounter with God’s unconditional love in Christ for each one of us and its relation to the experience of belonging to the communion of saints that is the Church. All doctrines are interpretations of this original, foundational grace, of the meaning of our encounter with the crucified and risen Christ. Once again, method and content coincide. Our present challenge from St. Paul to us today is to live as witnesses to this event.

Thank you.

Paredes: Thank you, Msgr. Albacete for the very profound reading of St. Paul in light of the teachings of the Holy Father. It is now my joy to introduce you to the person who will present our guest speaker for tonight. Fr. Robert Robbins is the pastor of the parish of the Holy Family at the United Nations. He is the head of the Ecumenical Affairs of the Archdiocese of New York, and he is a member of the Board of Trustees at the American Bible Society. He is a great supporter of all this initiative, he has sat and served on our Board here for over 15 years. We are grateful that he accompanies us tonight. Fr. Robert...

Robbins: Dr. Vest, who is now our President, and I were elected to the Board here on the same day. That was 17 years ago, and they looked at us as the young Turks—he was in his 30s, I was in my 40s. But Lamar, I found out something in the last week that changes everything: Archbishop Dolan, who we’ve all seen on television, is meeting with everybody who has an office at the Catholic Center basically to find out what you do if you do anything and whether or not your funding will be continued, all that good stuff. But he began my interview by saying to me, “How long are you ordained?” Now you’ve seen the Archbishop on television, so you know when he laughs it’s not just a twitter. So I told him how long I was ordained and he came out with this laugh that I’m sure my dead parents could have heard it. He said, “You’re older than I am.” Well, as I was looking through the curriculum of the Cardinal, I’m older than he is too! So Lamar, it has all changed.

We’re grateful to welcome the Cardinal tonight. He was born on May 23, 1949 in Steubenville, Ohio. He has a twin sister and two other siblings. He undertook his high school studies in Pittsburgh and studied for the

priesthood there. He was ordained on July 16, 1977 for the diocese of Pittsburgh and later undertook further studies in Rome at the Gregorian and the Augustinianum. He worked for the Congregation for Bishops in Rome from 1984 to 1991 and taught at the Pontifical North American College. He then returned to Pittsburgh to be a parish priest.

Pope John Paul II appointed him Coadjutor Bishop of Sioux City on August 19, 1997. He was consecrated on October 7, 1997 by Bishop Soens, the Bishop of Sioux City. He took over full governance of the diocese on November 28, 1998.

He was then named Coadjutor Bishop of Galveston-Houston on January 16, 2004. He was promoted to the rank of Archbishop when the diocese became an archdiocese on December 29, 2004. He succeeded to full governance of the archdiocese on February 28, 2006.

Pope Benedict XVI made him a Cardinal on November 24, 2007, the first time that a Cardinal in the United States was ever in the South.

We are very pleased to have him with us tonight. He has many other responsibilities in the Bishops Conference, but one of the great loves of his life is music. He is the advisor to the National Association of Pastoral Musicians and he will be addressing them this summer.

There is a Web site called catholic-hierarchy.org. As of this morning, in case the Cardinal didn't know, he has been a priest for 31.86 years, a bishop for 11.64 years, and a cardinal for 1.51 years. Ad multos annos...

DiNardo: Monsignor, thank you very much for your reflections on the Pope and St. Paul. Dr. Vest, thank you so much for your presence this evening, and to Rita, thank you very much.

Monsignor, you're going to find the opening of my talk is the famous homily last June of the opening of the Year of St. Paul. We didn't practice this in advance between Rita, myself and Monsignor, and yet we do concur on the importance of what Pope Benedict said there.

I want to express my gratitude to you-all here. We're from the Bible Belt down there and coming up here to these swanky city types is a real honor and privilege for me and I am indeed touched by the fact that they would think to invite someone from Galveston-Houston to come up to this wonderful place, the American Bible Society, Crossroads, and ask me to give a few comments on St. Paul.

Houston is a genuine Bible Belt city. I was at the Synod of Bishops last year and one of my comments was, after Hurricane Ike, they interviewed people in Galveston. I still recall they interviewed one woman whose whole store was gone on the strand under 8 feet of mud, just like our cathedral down there. And she said, "Look at the statue of Our Lady Star of the Sea on top of the cathedral! 'My soul magnifies the Lord.' We will get through this." Now that was Biblical. It was Luke; I think very Roman Catholic. Down the street, they interviewed another woman whose house was under 3 feet of mud. She came out, and under that magnificent dimension of the Baptist's face she said, 'The Lord done delivered my feet from the miry clay, and set them upon a rock.' It was accepted in Houston as normal discourse. That can't be said everywhere.

So I come at this obviously from Pittsburgh, the northeast, and from, as Pope John Paul II called it the first time I went in to see him after being named there, "See-ooks City," after coming from those two areas and now from great Galveston-Houston to give some reflections on St. Paul and the Holy Father.

In his homily on June 30, 2008, a homily given on the occasion of the Opening of the Pauline Year celebrating the 2000th Anniversary of the birth of St. Paul, Pope Benedict made mention of two actions he would do that

day: open the “Pauline” Door and light a Pauline torch. The door would remain open the entire year and the flame of the torch would burn bright for the entire year at the basilica of St. Paul’s Outside the Walls, a church that claims his burial place under the high altar. (I was at the Synod of Bishops the following October and got a great glimpse of the apostle’s tomb and the walls surrounding it. It was impressive.) An open door and an ever burning torch are instructive signs pointing to the person of the Apostle to the Gentiles. A door was opened to Saul who became Paul at the time of his conversion and the effect of the encounter that opened the door at first blinded him like a bright torch. But the same torch, the response of faith to the encounter, was also to set him on fire in his witness to truth and teaching. (opening doors) The torch of faith was also to consume him and by his suffering enable him to enter into a more profound understanding and experience of the crucified and risen Christ. The truth brought him to the love of God in Christ Jesus poured into his heart through the life-giving Spirit. The open door of conversion brought him into a new space, a journey of divine love bearing fruit in love for the brothers. He went through the Open Door and energetically invited all others to do the same, and became a burning torch of faith in the process.

I have been asked to speak about St. Paul in light of the themes that have been orchestrated about him in the homilies and speeches of Pope Benedict XVI this past year. I must first tell you that I have interest in Paul for professional/pastoral reasons; I am a Catholic priest and Bishop. I am not a professional exegete so cannot claim that form of competency in my treatment of Paul. But in the new Catholic lectionary of readings for Mass, published in 1970, St. Paul makes an almost weekly appearance over the three year cycle of Sunday Readings, and in the daily Readings, he appears at times in a continuous day by day reading of one of his Letters over a period of weeks. In addition, I am obligated to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours, the Daily Office, as a priest, and one of the Hours, the Office of Readings, also includes a great deal of St. Paul each year. So whether I want to or not I read and hear a “lot of Paul” each year. After 39 years of such exposure, some of his writing and presence begins to make an adherence in your heart and mind, especially when you must preach from his texts. Some might say I am “Pauline” by default, though I would in such case be also “johannine” and “marcan” and “lucan” by default. Occupational Hazard!

I also have a “personal” interest in St. Paul and read him at times with great attention to be inspired but also to be informed and to try to unpack his thinking. In such moments I read him in the original Greek. His thinking is sometimes very difficult, but extremely rewarding. He writes very good Koine Greek.

I want to center upon three themes that Pope Benedict highlighted in his homily at St. Paul’s Outside the Walls in Rome on June 30, 2008. They are: Paul’s encounter with the Risen Christ as the basis for witness to Faith and to the truth of the Gospel; Paul’s encounter with the Crucified Risen Lord as witness to the “totus Christus,” Christ Head and Members, the Church; Paul’s witness to the gift of the Holy Spirit, Love, Gift from the Father poured out through Christ. These are my interpretations and paraphrases of what the Holy Father spoke about that night and has spoken about during the past year. They also seem to fit together as Faith, Hope and Love, the theological virtues, virtues that we don’t produce; they are gifts lavished upon us.

The central event of Paul’s life is his encounter with the Crucified and Risen Jesus. He never tires of proclaiming this event and the insights that flow from it. The encounter gives him the Gospel, not a text or a philosophy, but an event and a person. The access is trusting faith leading to a full obedience of life. God is righteous and shows righteousness by sending his Son for salvation, the overcoming of sin and estrangement from God, author of the old Covenant, but a covenant renewed and transformed by the Cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his well beloved Son. Paul does not ever generally say he was “converted.” He says, “I died!” His new “form” of life was a new eloquence and a new wisdom, not from men but from God. His new form of life was “cruciform:” he put on the death of the Lord and was transformed; Jesus caught him by surprise and nailed him to the Cross. Through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul died and rose, and lived in expectation of the fullness of that event of faith.

Once Paul had met the Risen Christ, he had to witness to Him; he had the urgency to share the truth, the genuineness, of Christ crucified and Risen, though he knew such talk was scandalous. Because of the public “spectacle” of the cross, Paul insists and focuses on this event as the bottom line truth. He does not give many sayings from the public life of Christ nor does he dwell on the notion of the Gospel as a continuous narrative of that life and teaching. For him the Gospel is an event of proclamation in power, its truth “evidenced” in the life of Christians won over to Christ. The “Gospel of God” and the “Gospel of Christ” are used as subjective and objective genitives. On the one hand, subjective genitives—God and Christ are the authors; the Gospel speaks about who God is and who Christ is. On the other hand, the “content” of the Gospel is God’s Love and overcoming of sin and estrangement of all human beings through the act of obedience of Jesus Christ to the Father that cancels that disobedience in principle. (Glad you mentioned pastoral musicians. Paul quoted a Psalm in Phil. 2: 6-11, probably pre-Pauline, but he quoted a hymn when he really had to get down to cry out what Jesus meant. You can’t just talk about it; you’ve got to sing about it.) It is incumbent upon us to receive the event in obedience that comes from faith. That’s why faith is so critical to St. Paul. In this radical sense, the law, once useful, is of no avail. The Law of Moses, good, is used as an excuse for self-justification, of pride, and thus of sin. (That was certainly true for Saul.) In the obedience of faith, there is a new found freedom, a freedom that bears fruit not a freedom for license and self-will. All who come to faith have met the Risen Christ in person though not perhaps with the same drama as St. Paul. (In my reading of the Easter season this year I’ve noticed that. Anybody who meets the Risen Christ gets a job, maybe because of the economic situation. Everyone who meets the Risen Christ gets a job. Did you ever notice that? There are no unemployed Christians in that sense.) By this faith one becomes a disciple. Paul recognizes that he was called simultaneously as disciple, but also as APOSTLE. The Pope points this out. His mission was to make known this Christ and Paul’s mission is effective, even as effective as those who were apostles before him, which he does not tire of pointing out. I always loved Galatians, “I’m no less than any of those super-apostles! I know what I’m up to. You can’t pull this over on me.”

I believe that Paul set something new in operation by contrasting the Gospel and Christian Faith with both the “natural wisdom” of philosophy and the Law of Moses, taken as comprehensive and complete. His Gospel of Faith indicates a deeper understanding of who God is, to be sure in clear continuity with the Jewish covenant, but also revealing sides and profiles that are new. The “tensing” of two stages in Christ’s “life,” one according to David in the flesh and the other raised up and constituted in divine power by the resurrection, is a provocative way to get at the new sense of “presence” and “absence” of the Father of all who “gives” his Son for love of sinful humankind. The notion of “infinite” transcendence together with genuine “compassion” for the creatures of “this” world will be a major trajectory in theological analysis thereafter. We should not discount this “tensing” in Paul as what was his treatment of the infinite transcendence, this absence and presence.

The second theme I wish to mention is the Pauline sense of the “totus christus,” or Christ and the Church. The word is from St. Augustine (you’ll have to forgive me; I live in the 4th Century; my degree is in Patristics. My priests tell me that, but I couldn’t care less. If we lived in the 4th Century, we wouldn’t be in half the trouble we’re in right now!) but the latter has grasped an essential dimension of Paul’s thinking. 1 Corinthians will speak of the image of the Body as one apt to describe many spiritual gifts yet all given for the common good. But earlier in the same letter, Paul speaks of baptism as incorporation into the Body of Christ as more than moral agreement. We are temples, members of the Body of Christ. Further, in the same letter, Chapter 10, in the Eucharist, the one loaf and the one Cup put us into intimacy with Christ. He is the head and we are the members. Such incorporation builds up Hope and allows the promises to be continually unfolded both in personal life and in the life of the community. This thought is moved further in Colossians and Ephesians, letters that spend much time on the meaning of the Church. In many ways Paul’s thinking on the Church is always a reference to local Churches, or to the privilege of the Churches in Judea. But Paul also has an incipient sense of the Church beyond the borders of Jew and Greek, or of this place and that place. Faith in Christ Jesus allows intimacy that is corporate and more than a moral will of concord. There is a sense of incorporation for all who come to Christ and through Him have access to the Father. Such a view of the Church,

inclusive of many gifts and ministries will be of subsequent importance for the history of the Christian community. This past Saturday night, Pope Benedict alluded to this sense in his homily that he preached to those who were to be baptized at St. Peter's. I note that Paul's view of the Church is nestled intensely in his experience of the Crucified and Risen Lord, his death and his glory, the great event that set him on his course, which Pope Benedict spoke about at length on the night of Easter.

The third theme I highlight is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The life in the Holy Spirit is the gift given by the Father through the Risen Christ to Paul and to all those who come to the act of Faith in Christ. Each Christian and the Church itself is endowed with the gift of the Spirit and the manifold gifts that come from the Spirit. The greatest aspect of the Gift is to be "in Christ." The Spirit gives intimacy and union. The Spirit also allows many charisms and spiritual talents to be distributed to the members of Christ. They help to build up the Church and each member to a fullness, one that will reach full glory in the second coming, the Parousia. There are many gifts but the same Spirit working in them all.

The greatest act of the Spirit is the gift of theological Love, a reality sung about by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. (I've always been amazed that couples pick 1 Corinthians 13 for their wedding day, when you see what he said to the community right before. Boy is he mad, and then suddenly breaks into this paean of praise. And I always tell the couple, "It's not about your love; it's about God's love." They don't get it. Probably they shouldn't.) It is the greatest of the theological gifts and has the Spirit as its origin, for the Spirit is the pouring out of the Love of the Father in sending his Son to us as Savior, Brother, and Lord. At the same time, this Love is concrete and is manifested in specific acts and aptitudes of each member of the Christian community. The glorious freedom of the children of God is the result of Divine Love and the love of the children is a freedom for incorruptibility and a first fruits for a future resurrection of the dead. The radical newness of God's Love in Christ Jesus is one of the more significant aspects of Paul's encounter with the Risen Lord, a meeting that was to set his mind theologically unpacking this untold mercy of Christ towards the children of Adam, now children in Christ. That untold mercy is through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul is very insistent on the reality of "eyewitness" testimony; if he begins with himself as one such, he does not deny it to others who were eyewitnesses before him as 1 Corinthians 15 displays on the truth of the resurrection. The truth of an eyewitness is partially verification of what happened, partially the reporting in writing of what was seen or heard, and partially proclamation to others of all this. It allows an elementary sense of "history" of what occurred. For St. Paul and other early Christian witnesses what they saw and heard of the earthly Jesus, and especially of the Crucified and Risen Jesus was more than a matter of words though it involved words and a record. It was a matter of God's power revealed through the seeming "weakness" of the crucified Son of God. It was history and more than history. It was the reality of Easter.

St. Paul tells us that he SAW the Risen Jesus, the one Crucified, the One who changed him and made everything else look like rubbish. He admits that he was one "born out of time" unlike other apostles and early disciples. He insists on his special call and election because he becomes the extreme case of a truth-filled proclamation of Christ, the one and only Savior. He can thus manifest that when the Gospel is preached and believed the power of the Risen Christ does come alive, and comes to every disciple. The Crucified and Risen One has moved to a "space" beyond time, though he DID live and die in time; the gift of the Holy Spirit draws the hearer of the bold proclamation of Jesus Christ into the same reality of witness. The new believer "verifies" anew what Jesus Christ has done. But the new believer is never an isolated individual for St. Paul or the early Church, but is already a "member" of the Body of Christ, the Church. The "original" eyewitnesses make up a ground of historical verification of what Jesus said and did, most especially what he accomplished by his voluntary Cross and Resurrection, but the ground is rich and fertile and is constantly producing more members of Christ's Temple and Body, his Church. One should never underestimate the role of St. Paul in making the Church mindful of the "new" act of love of God the Father in sending his Son to live among us, and save us by his Cross and Glory. The Holy Father calls attention to this notice of verification, this whole notion of where the

truth is. Notice in the Christian dispensation, the truth to his person; it does involve a record and some objective data, but it also involves a verification which is a person's life, an event of encounter, something which Msgr. Albacete has just treated us to in his own statements.

As an apostle and eyewitness, St. Paul was graced to show us an important dimension of the meanings of "redemption" and "salvation." Drawing on his encounter with Christ at Damascus, his experience and thinking, and his communion with others in the early Church communities, he recognized the terrible estrangement of humanity from God, an estrangement that somehow was "chosen" in Adam, an estrangement which no philosophy could think us out of, an estrangement which even the good Law of Moses could not erase or soften, though Paul as Saul the Pharisee, once thought that it was possible to observe the whole law and thus justify himself and stand before God as pure and self-approved. No, what St. Paul discovered, the estrangement was deeper; it was aligned with the fact and meaning of human death, though biological human death was only a symptom of that estrangement from life. The estrangement was sin, and sin was malevolence, a hatred of the God who is life and love. Humanity and each human being were caught up in malevolence, a hatred of God. This wound needed radical love for healing the rupture. Our everyday sinfulness looks harmless because the malevolence of sin has been papered over by excuses. But what St. Paul saw was in the voluntary giving of Himself, Jesus Christ pulled back the excuses and revealed sin for what it truly is, and love for what it truly is. His action changed the relationship of human beings before the Father, for his action of the Cross was done first and foremost before his loving Father, his "Abba." The result is a graced existence for humanity and for each person. The Father confirmed this action of Christ in the Resurrection. For St. Paul that meant he could proclaim, be an eyewitness, be a carrier of truth, - of nothing else than of Christ Crucified and Risen. This is the urgency of his message and of his life. It is a message that needs to be heard by every disciple, in season and out of season.

I want to conclude my reflections with a conclusion of a famous homily on St. Paul. We don't usually hear such things in the West. One of the great commentators of the Eastern Church on St. Paul is St. John Chrysostom. He wrote 32 homilies on the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans, and at the conclusion of his final homily, John Chrysostom said this:

I love Rome even for this, although indeed one has other grounds for praising it, both for its greatness, and its antiquity, and its beauty, and its populousness, and for its power, and for its wealth, and for its successes in war. But I let all this pass, and esteem it blessed on this account, that both in his lifetime he [Paul] wrote to them, and loved them so, and talked with them while he was with us, and brought his life to a close there. Therefore the city is more notable upon this ground, than upon all others together. And as a body great and strong, it has as two glistening eyes the bodies of these Saints. Not so bright is the heaven, when the sun sends forth its rays, as is the city of Rome, sending out these two lights into all parts of the world. From thence will Paul be caught up, from thence Peter. Just think and shudder at the thought of what a sight Rome will see, when Paul arises suddenly from the tomb together with Peter, and is lifted up to meet the Lord. What a rose will Rome send up to Christ! What two crowns will the city have about it! What golden chains will she be girded with! What fountains possess! Therefore I admire the city not for the much gold, not for the columns, not for the other display there, but for these pillars of the Church. Would that it were now given me to throw myself round the body of Paul, and be riveted to the tomb, and see the dust of that body that filled up that which was lacking after Christ, that bore the marks, sowed the Gospel everywhere, yea, the dust of that body through which Christ spoke... Fain would I see the dust of those eyes which were blinded gloriously, which recovered their sight again for the salvation of the world; which even in the body were counted worthy to see Christ, which saw earthly things, yet saw them not, which saw the things which are not seen, which saw no sleep,

which were watchful at midnight, which were not affected as eyes are. I would also see the dust of those feet, which ran through the world and were not weary; which were bound in the stocks when the prison shook, which went through parts habitable or uninhabited, which walked on so many journeys. And why need I speak of single parts? Fain would I see the tomb, where the armor of righteousness is laid up, the armor of light, the limbs which now live, but which in life were made dead; and in all whereof Christ lived, which were crucified to the world, which were Christ's members, which were clad in Christ. This body is a wall to that City, which is safer than all towers, and than thousands of battlements (Hom. 32 LFC).

What a way to end a homily on St. Paul. And that is John Chrysostom, year 410 AD. From my point of view, John and others have recognized, indeed Pope Benedict has recognized in St. Paul, now 2000 years after his birth we still have one of the most major figures that illuminates the face of Jesus for us.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to share my brief reflections. May God grant you all the grace to live out the rest of the Pauline year in joy, study, prayer and witness.

Paredes: Dear Friends, this June 29th, with the celebration of the solemnity of the apostles Peter and Paul ends the Pauline year called for by Pope Benedict XVI. Its aim was to deepen our knowledge of the life and works of the man, the convert, the Christian, the theologian, the writer, the missionary, Saul, Paul of Tarsus. Christians owe an immense gratitude to the life and work of these two pillars of Christianity... In the Solemnity of Peter and Paul which we are about to celebrate, the tribute to the memory and sanctity of these two great men... in fact, in that solemnity the Church sings well to the unity in diversity which should compose the Church of Jesus Christ. "Peter, the first in confessing the faith, Paul the distinguished teacher who interpreted; Peter, founder of the primitive Church with the rest of Israel, Paul, who extended it to all peoples—two different paths, both put together the only Church of Christ, and to both who were crowned by martyrdom, your people celebrate today with the same veneration." With these words we conclude this series of lectures on Paul to mark the 2000th birth of the apostle. We are grateful to Crossroads Cultural Center, to Dr. Lamar Vest who is here with us and honored us with his presence, to the members of the Board of Trustees, and most especially to Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete who is a dear friend, and a profound, thoughtful theologian, and of course to His Eminence who just flew this morning from Houston to New York and tomorrow at 5:30 in the morning will be returning back to his hometown. And so to them my gratitude, and let us express it with a warm applause...