

Patrons of Parishes

SAINT PAUL, APOSTLE OF GENTILES

ST Paul pre-eminently is the apostle. He who lived, struggled and suffered solely to announce Jesus crucified must be represented, as our engraving shows him, preaching the *unknown God* to the pagan world.

St Paul was at first one of the fiercest persecutors of the nascent Church. During the stoning of St Stephen he stood near the executioners and held their garments. Stephen, the first martyr, prayed for his enemies and his prayer was soon granted in the person of the most ferocious of his persecutors. For some time longer he made himself more conspicuous than any other by his violence against the Christians. He searched houses, he dragged away men and women, forcing them to blaspheme the name of Jesus or putting them in prison. So great was the terror he inspired that the neophytes fled from Jerusalem and scattered throughout the various towns of Judaea and Syria, thereby carrying the fruitful seed of the Gospel afar off. Paul resolved to go and seize the faithful who had sought refuge at Damascus, to load them with chains and to bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.

Like a raging lion breathing but threats and carnage, he was about to enter Damascus when suddenly he found himself surrounded by a heavenly light and he fell on the road as if struck by a thunderbolt. Then he heard a voice saying to him: «Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?» — «Who art thou, Lord?» he answered. And at the same time, raising his eyes to heaven, he saw Jesus-Christ brilliant with the glory of his immortality. The Lord replied to him: «I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad as thou hast hitherto done.» — «Lord, said he, what wilt thou have me do?» Happy words which of Saul made Paul; of the bloodthirsty wolf of Benjamin the doctor and pastor of so many nations; of the blasphemer against the name of Jesus, the