



## RESOURCE KIT FOR THE STUDY OF SAINT PAUL: SESSION FOUR

This 'kit' is provided as a follow-up to the interactive e-conference on Paul sponsored by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to mark the close of the Year of Paul on 30 June, 2009. It may be used by individuals or by groups of people who might meet regularly to use it as a basis for communal study, reflection and discussion.

The passages are taken from Paul's **Letters**, along with some extracts from the **Acts of the Apostles** that provide a context for what we read in the Letters. Details from the Letters and the Acts are not always in harmony, since they stem from different times. But together they fill out the picture.

The selection of passages has been made according to major **themes** that feature in the Letters of Paul. While this procedure may give a more rounded presentation of Paul's theology, it has the disadvantage of removing the passages from their immediate contexts in the wider texts. Those who have time and leisure might profit from reading the entire letters from which the selections are taken.

Those who would prefer to study **entire** letters are advised to begin with the shorter ones such as **Philippians**, **1 Thessalonians**, **Philemon**, and **Colossians**.

Though the early themes by way of introduction focus upon Paul's early life and mission, the later ones follow in no particular **order**. Individuals or groups should feel free to pick and choose among the themes as they see fit, rather than being bound to see the whole course through to the end.

The **Questions** posed at the conclusion to each selection are intended to stimulate the reflection and discussion that might promote deeper engagement with the texts. It is in no sense necessary to move through all the questions. Stay with those that you or your group find most interesting. The final questions in each case are more directed to seeking the meaning of the texts for our life in the Church today.

In some cases the texts are accompanied—before or after— by a **Note** explaining the role of the text in the wider context and providing information essential for understanding.

The **translation** used in the texts is that of the *New Revised Standard Version* (with spelling occasionally modified to conform to Australian usage).

Brendan Byrne, SJ  
July 2009

## **AN INCLUSIVE GOSPEL: AN ISSUE RESOLVED SESSION FOUR**

### Chapter 2

It was not until fourteen years had gone by that I travelled up to Jerusalem again, with Barnabas, and I took Titus with me too. My journey was inspired by a revelation and there, in a private session with the recognised leaders, I expounded the whole gospel that I preach to the gentiles, to make quite sure that the efforts I was making and had already made should not be fruitless. Even then, and although Titus, a Greek, was with me, there was no demand that he should be circumcised; but because of some false brothers who had secretly insinuated themselves to spy on the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, intending to reduce us to slavery- people we did not defer to for one moment, or the truth of the gospel preached to you might have been compromised but those who were recognised as important people -- whether they actually were important or not: There is no favouritism with God -those recognised leaders, I am saying, had nothing to add to my message. On the contrary, once they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been entrusted to me, just as to Peter the gospel for the circumcised for he who empowered Peter's apostolate to the circumcision also empowered mine to the gentiles, and when they acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, then James and Cephas and John, who were the ones recognised as pillars, offered their right hands to Barnabas and to me as a sign of partnership: we were to go to the gentiles and they to they to the circumcised. They asked nothing more than that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do in any case.

**(Gal 2:1-10)**

#### Questions:

- a) What is the significance of circumcision in the Jewish Faith?
- b) Why is the mission to the uncircumcised so important to Paul?
- c) In what aspects of our contemporary Church are we asked to 'shake hands about'?