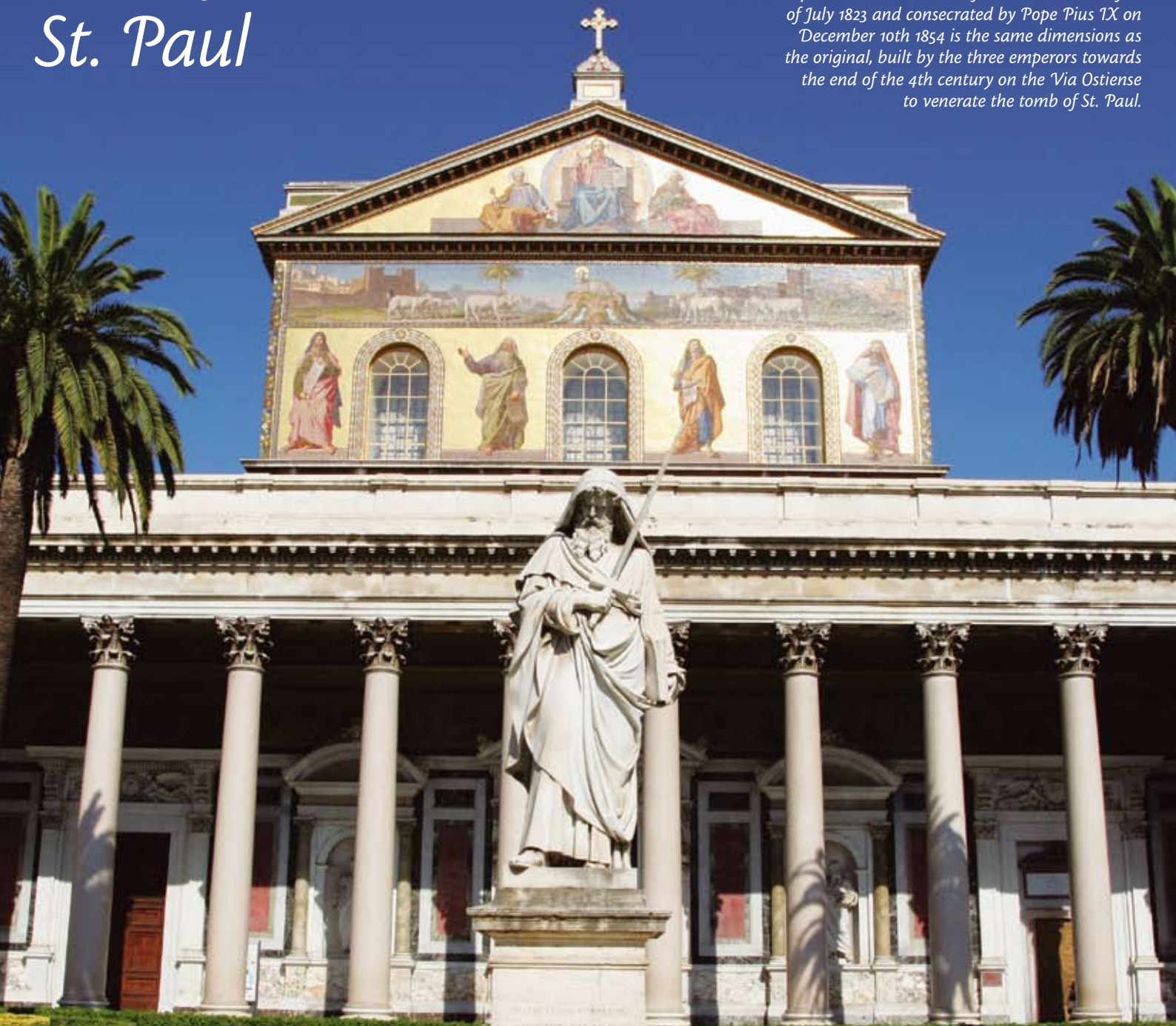


The Year of St. Paul

The Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, the centre of celebration and observance of the Year of St. Paul, was built at the end of the 4th century by Roman emperors Valentinian II, Arcadius and Theodosius and finally inaugurated by Emperor Honorius, the son of Theodosius.

The present Basilica, built after the destructive fire of July 1823 and consecrated by Pope Pius IX on December 10th 1854 is the same dimensions as the original, built by the three emperors towards the end of the 4th century on the Via Ostiense to venerate the tomb of St. Paul.



Pope Benedict XVI Opens The Pauline Year

On the afternoon of Saturday June 28th in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, the first Vespers for the solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul, presided over by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, marked the opening ceremony of the Pauline Year. The celebration had great ecumenical significance due to the presence of the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew 1st and delegations from other Christian traditions as well as the Greek Melkite Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Gregorios III, together with archbishops and bishops with thousands of pilgrims and faithful.

*Quadriportico with 19th century
statue of St. Paul holding his
symbol, the sword*



*Chapel of the
Blessed
Sacrament
(1725) with
14th century
crucifix*

The Journey to Christian Unity in the Year of St. Paul

The Year of St Paul, or, rather, “the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Saint Paul, a tireless worker for unity in the early Church,” was, of course, evoked by Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of the World Youth gathering in Sydney. The precise moment was Friday 18 July at the ecumenical meeting in St Mary’s Cathedral.

The Holy Father spoke as follows: “In the scripture passage we have just heard, Paul reminds us of the tremendous grace we have received in becoming members of Christ’s body through baptism. This sacrament, the entryway to the Church and the “bond of unity” for everyone reborn through it (cf. Unitatis Redintegratio, 22), is accordingly the point of departure for the entire ecumenical movement. Yet it is not the final

destination. The road of ecumenism ultimately points towards a common celebration of the Eucharist (cf. Ut Unum Sint, 23-24; 45), which Christ entrusted to his Apostles as the sacrament of the Church’s unity par excellence.

Although there are still obstacles to be overcome, we can be sure that a common Eucharist one day would only strengthen our resolve to love and serve one another in imitation of our Lord: for Jesus’ commandment to “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19) is intrinsically ordered to his admonition to “wash one another’s feet” (Jn 13:14).

For this reason, a candid dialogue concerning the place of the Eucharist – stimulated by a renewed and attentive study of scripture, patristic writings and documents from across the two millennia of Christian history (cf. Ut Unum Sint, 69-70) – will undoubtedly help to advance the ecumenical movement and unify our witness to the world.”



Choir and Apse of the church of St. Paul Outside the Walls

Vocations in the Pauline Year

The Holy Father Benedict XVI has emphasised the importance to pray for Vocations in this Pauline Year. The occasion was the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2008.

He reminded the more than forty thousand faithful gathered in St Peter's Square: "In the experience of the Apostle of the Gentiles whom our Lord called to be 'a minister of the Gospel', vocation and mission are inseparable," he said. "Paul therefore represents a model for every Christian, in particular for those lifelong missionaries, those men and women who dedicate themselves completely to the work of proclaiming Christ to those who still do not know Him – a vocation which is still entirely valid today.

First and foremost those who carry out this missionary service are the priests who minister the Word of God and the Sacraments, as well as making visible the healing presence of Jesus Christ through their pastoral charity to all, especially the

sick, the children and the poor. Let us give thanks to God for these brothers of ours who give themselves wholeheartedly to their pastoral ministry, affirming their faith in Christ through the sacrifice of their lives.

Let us also pray for a continual increase in the numbers of those who decide to live out the Gospel in a radical way through vows of chastity, poverty and obedience: these men and women have a primary role in evangelisation.

Some of these faithful dedicate themselves to contemplation and prayer, others to the many different forms of education and charity, yet all share the same goal – that of bearing witness to the supremacy of God in all things and of spreading His kingdom throughout all levels of society. Finally we must not forget that Christian marriage is also a missionary vocation: spouses are in fact called to live the Gospel in their families, in their places of work and in their parish or local communities. In certain cases furthermore, they also offer a precious collaboration in the mission ad gentes."



The marble nave church of St. Paul Outside the Walls, looking towards the doors to the quadriportico