“WHAT HAVE THE ROMANS EVER DONE FOR US?”

This is a line from a comedy film from the 80’s set in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. In this scene, a group of Jewish men are complaining about Roman rule and asked this question. One in their midst answers truthfully, “the Aqueducts, roads, commerce, and peace”.

The Romans did play an unwitting part in the spread of Christianity. The *Pax Romana*, “Roman Peace”, allowed people to move freely between regions, the paved roads made traveling easier, and the large commercial population centers made it easier to reach a large number of people.

So the Romans did a lot for the Ancient World!

**Did you know?**
The Romans and Greeks worshipped many of the same gods but called them by different names.
Zeus was the Greek god who was the father of all gods. The Romans called him Jupiter.

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PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

**Sacred Scripture**
Acts 12:25-14:28
Luke 4:14-30

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**
If time permits #2056-2059 and 2112-2113

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**PARENTS’ & CATECHISTS’ READING REFLECTION & PRAYER**

**Sacred Scripture**
Acts 12:25-14:28
Luke 4:14-30

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**
If time permits #2056-2059 and 2112-2113
STUDENTS’ READING REFLECTION & PRAYER

Sacred Scripture
Grades K-1 The Illustrated Acts of the Apostles pp. 30-33
Grades 2-4 Bible for Young Catholics pp. 293
Grades 5-12 Acts 12:25-14:28
      Luke 4:14-30

Catechism
Grades K-2 First Communion Catechism pp. n/a
Grades 3-6 Baltimore Catechism #1 pp. n/a
Grades 7-12 Catechism of the Catholic Church n/a

TEACHING STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES

THEME: PAUL AND BARNABAS BRING THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL TO A NEW LEVEL AS THEY MOVE BEYOND THE HOLY LAND TO PREACH THE “GOOD NEWS” TO THE NATIONS [“A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES”].

OBJECTIVES:
Read and Discuss Paul’s first mission emphasizing these points:
   Paul travels with Barnabas and John-Mark (who leaves the mission)
   Their mission plan of visiting large and well populated cities, preaching first to the Jews in the synagogues...then to the gentiles
   Paul’s unusual miracle
   Paul and Barnabas’ reception at each of their stops
   How their reception relates to the Gospel in Luke 4:14-30

OPENING PRAYER
YOUR CHOICE

REVIEW:
From Lesson 8:
RESURRECTION
TEN COMMANDMENTS
THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS
PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

MAP OF PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

1. Paul, Barnabas and Mark leave Syrian Antioch and arrive in Cyprus
2. From Cyprus they sail to Perga. Mark leaves the group.
3. Next stop is Pisidian Antioch
4. Driven out of Antioch they continue on to Iconium.
5. Once again the crowds drive them out and they go on to Lystra.
6. Mistaken for a god Paul is stoned by a mob and left for dead. They continue on to Derbe.

WHAT DO ALL OF THESE MAPS AND LINES MEAN?

Many people look at maps of Saul’s 3 Missionary Journeys…and his journey to Rome, and are confused by all of the “squiggly lines.” Since they do not know the geography, the history, or Saul’s Plan, the maps don’t mean much to them.

In New Testament times the Romans ruled the “known world.” The Mediterranean Sea [the Romans called it Mare Nostrum or “Our Sea,”] was a great “highway” across which the Roman Legions could travel on ships to defend their territories or to conquer new lands. The very extensive system of Roman Roads enabled their armies to march over land. The sea and the roads also allowed extensive trading to take place among the nations of their time. Great cities and trading ports sprung up along the roads and on the shores of the sea. Saul, seeking maximum exposure for the Gospel, naturally gravitated towards these civil and cultural centers of his time.

Imagine that Saul was trying to evangelize the United States. Rome was the Capitol of the Empire… so its equivalent would be Washington D.C. in our country. Syrian Antioch was the third most powerful city in the empire… much like Los Angeles in our own country. Think of the highways or interstates which connect these cities. How would you travel and where would you stop?… and you’ll be thinking a bit like Saul as he planned his missions. You would want to visit New York, Chicago, and Denver [not Altoona, South Bend, and Sioux Falls].

WHERE HAS SAUL BEEN SINCE HIS TRIP TO JERUSALEM?

When we last left Saul he had returned to his home in Tarsus after receiving threats to his life in Jerusalem. He probably returned to his business as a tentmaker. He remains there for several years until the Holy Spirit once again presses him into service through Barnabas. And now the rest of the story…
WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH BARNABAS AND SAUL...BUT WHO IS, “JOHN, WHO IS CALLED MARK”?

We have mentioned before how in Biblical Times people often had two names [Abram—Abraham; Jacob—Israel; Jedediah—Solomon; Simon—Peter; John—Boanerges; Joseph—Barnabas; and of course… Saul—Paul].

John Mark was the son of a woman named Mary. Mary owned a home where the members of the early Church frequently met and prayed. The Last Supper may well have been celebrated in the upper room of their home… and John Mark was probably the young man who followed the Apostles into the Garden of Eden and ran away naked when Judas betrayed Jesus to the Roman Soldiers [see MK 14:51—2]. Barnabas and Paul invited young John Mark to join them on their first Missionary Journey.

John Mark was later a faithful disciple of St. Peter in Rome and is probably the author of “The Holy Gospel According to Mark.”

WHERE IS CYPRUS?

Cyprus is a very large island [about 150 miles long] off of the coast of Syria [north of Palestine]. It was well populated, and about halfway the distance across the sea between Syria and Asia Minor [modern day Turkey]. It was the native land of Barnabas—so it is natural that Barnabas and Saul would make their first stop in this land with which Barnabas was so familiar.

WHY DOES SAUL’S NAME “CHANGE” IN THIS CHAPTER? [VERSE 9]

In Chapter 13, verse 9 Luke mentions almost casually, “Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit.” From this point forth in Acts of the Apostles this is how Luke refers to “Saul.” It is most likely a sign that Saul [his Jewish name] began to refer to himself as Paul [a more Roman, “cosmopolitan” name] to reflect that he was now going to spend most of his time in gentile countries.

WHAT IS UNUSUAL ABOUT PAUL’S FIRST MIRACLE IN THIS EPISODE?

Usually miracles are worked to cure or to help someone. Elymas—also known as “Bar-Jesus” is an evil magician who is leading others into darkness. Paul strikes him blind, “for a time,” so that perhaps Elymas’ followers might see clearly that he is leading them away from the Light. Even though the story is unusual, the punishment of Elymas seems just—since as a false magician he is a Son of Satan who is blinding others. In a way, Paul is curing blindness [the blindness of Elymas’ followers] by showing them how blind Elymas truly is.

IT MIGHT BE WORTH POINTING OUT AT THIS POINT, THAT ALTHOUGH MANY FILMS SUCH AS THE HARRY POTTER FILMS ARE VERY POPULAR AND ENJOYED BY MANY, THEY ARE ONLY FICTION. IN REAL LIFE TO TAKE MAGIC SERIOUSLY AND TO TRY TO CALL ON SPIRITUAL POWERS AND USE POTIONS AND SPELLS IS NEVER GOOD—IT IS ALWAYS AN APPEAL…DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO THE DEVIL AND THE DARK ANGELS. THIS IS A SERIOUS SIN. PLAYING WITH TAROT CARDS OR “OUIJA BOARDS” IS WRONG AND DANGEROUS.

[THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE “MAGIC TRICKS”… WITH REGULAR PLAYING CARDS OR OTHER PROPS… WHICH ARE ONLY A FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT. THIS IS NOT REALLY MAGIC, BUT IS ONLY “SLIGHT OF HAND.”]

WHERE DO THEY GO AFTER THEY LEAVE CYPRUS?

They head north across a stretch of the Mediterranean Sea and land at Perga in Pamphylia on the southern coast of Asia Minor [the big, “elliptical” shaped landmass jutting out into the sea]. Asia Minor was one of the largest and most populated territories of the Roman Empire.

WHO LEAVES THE GROUP AND GOES HOME? WHY DID HE LEAVE?

John Mark leaves the Apostolic Band. He probably left because the mighty Taurus Mountain Range loomed before them—a very difficult and hazardous stretch of country. In the mountain passes were many robbers and killers [a lot like the stretch of road between Jericho and Jerusalem]. It looks like John Mark “chickened out” and headed home…and reminds us of how he ran away in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested.
THEY GO TO ANTIOCH? ARE THERE MORE THAN ONE “ANTIOCHS”?

There are several “Antiochs”. Barnabas and Paul began their missionary journey in Syrian Antioch—the 3rd greatest city in the empire. The Antioch they visit at this point in their mission is called Pisidian Antioch, and is not nearly as large or important as the other Antioch.

HOW DOES PAUL ADDRESS THE SYNAGOGUE AT ANTIOCH?

This speech is very similar to other great addresses given earlier by Peter [ACTS 2:14—41]; and Stephen [ACTS 7:1—53].

CATECHISTS…YOU MAY WANT TO WORK THROUGH THIS SPEECH WITH THEM, OR IF THEY ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH THE LOGIC AND PRESENTATION, MOVE ON TO THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL.

DOES PAUL WIN MANY FOLLOWERS WITH THIS ADDRESS?

It seems that he does…for the following week, “almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of God.”

WHAT EVENTUALLY HAPPENS TO PAUL AND BARNABUS AT ANTIOCH?

You guessed it. They were persecuted and driven out. There always have been and always will be [at least until the end of the world] enemies of Christ wherever the Gospel is preached.

WHEN PAUL AND BARNABUS GO TO ICONIUM, WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM THERE?

The same thing happens to them all over again. They leave Iconium and move on to Lystra.

CATECHISTS: YOU MAY WANT TO HELP THE KIDS FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF PAUL AND BARNABUS AS THEY MOVE FROM PLACE TO PLACE. SOME CALL THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY THE “FISH-HOOK”… SINCE THIS IS THE GENERAL PATTERN OF THEIR JOURNEY THROUGH ASIA MINOR.

WHAT IS IRONIC ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO PAUL AT LYSTRA?

Paul and Barnabas are traveling about the world to teach people about the One True God. The Pagans believe in many “False gods.” Because of the appearance and the power of Barnabas and Paul, the foolish people think they are “gods”… Zeus and Hermes.

So the people have a pretty good go at breaking the FIRST COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT HAVE FALSE GODS BEFORE ME! They try to offer sacrifices and to worship Paul and Barnabas. When Paul and Barnabas realize what the people are doing, they tear their clothes [this is what Jews did when they encountered sacrilege and blasphemy] and tell the people to stop!

Again the “pattern” of enthusiasm/persecution plays itself out. Mobs are fickle…they sway back and forth. In a brief span of time they go from wild enthusiasm and excitement about Barnabas and Paul [thinking they are gods] to anger and hatred… they try to stone them!

Do you remember how crowds of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus with “Hosannah” on Palm Sunday… …and cried “Crucify Him, Crucify Him” a few days later?

Crowds and Mobs cannot be trusted! We must strive to avoid being a part of mobs… and “mob mentality.”

WHAT SHOULD WE CONSIDER AS WE PONDER THIS STONING OF PAUL?

Well, it is certainly a bit ironic—since Paul presided over the stoning of the first martyr, St. Stephen. Sometimes, “What goes around, comes around," and we find what we have done to others suddenly being done to us. But Paul is happy to suffer for the sake of Jesus’ Name.

There is in this story a very interesting detail that tells us something about Paul. The crowd has bashed him up so badly that they think he is dead. Stubborn Paul gets up…and instead of running [or crawling] away to safety, he goes back into the town! Paul is relentless when it comes to preaching the Gospel.

WHAT follows this episode?

Paul and Barnabas retrace their steps…heading back through the places they have evangelized. Ultimately they arrive in Antioch [in Syria] and report what they have seen and heard and accomplished.
“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”
MOMENTS FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST
LUKE 4:14—30  JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

WHEN DOES THIS STORY HAPPEN DURING JESUS’ PUBLIC MINISTRY?
This incident probably takes place during the late winter, perhaps January or February of 29 AD. Jesus has been “on the road” and away from Nazareth for more than a year. Although He has spent most of that time in the region of Galilee and the towns around and about Nazareth [Cana, Capharnum, Bethsaida, etc.], it does not appear that He has spent any time in Nazareth.

HOW DO THE PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOGUE…JESUS’S OLD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS FIRST REACT?
Many reacted favorably… but some were cynical, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” They were probably surprised to see the son of a carpenter presuming to get up and to teach them. Mark [John Mark!] in his Gospel records some of the other words the people spoke…

WHERE DID HE GET ALL THIS? WHAT KIND OF WISDOM IS HE ENDOWED WITH? HOW IS IT THAT SUCH MIRACULOUS DEEDS ARE ACCOMPLISHED BY HIS HANDS? IS THIS NOT THE CARPENTER, THE SON OF MARY…? THEY FOUND HIM TOO MUCH FOR THEM [MK 6:2—3].

Those people were probably also a bit envious that Jesus had spent so much time in nearby towns.

WHAT DOES JESUS SAY TO THEM, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

CATECHISTS…READ THROUGH JESUS’ WORDS IN VERSES 23—27…
Jesus points out that frequently those people who know us best…sometimes even our own family, are unable to accept us when we try to teach them about the Gospel.

Jesus then reminds them of two of the greatest Old Testament prophets… Elijah and Elisha… who performed miracles… not for their own people, the Jews… but for foreigners. His message? Often the people who think they themselves are the brightest and the best and the most privileged “miss the boat” because of their own narrow-mindedness and lack of Faith.

FAITH is THE VIRTUE WHICH GIVES US THE ABILITY TO BELIEVE IN GOD AND THE MYSTERIES WHICH HE HAS REVEALED.

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE TRY TO DO AFTER JESUS IS FINISHED SPEAKING?
They are so irritated and enraged by His words that they try to kill Him by throwing Him off of a cliff.

WHY DON’T PETER, JAMES, JOHN AND THE REST OF THE APOSTLES PROTECT JESUS?
This episode probably took place while the 12 Apostles had been sent out on mission by Jesus. They would return sometime after this incident took place.

Jesus unrolls the scroll in the synagogue
James Tissot, 1886-1894
Brooklyn Museum, NY

Jesus at Nazareth
Johann Christoph Weigel, 1695
From “Biblia Ectypa”
WHY DO PEOPLE TEND TO REACT VIOLENTLY TOWARDS JESUS [AND PETER AND PAUL AND STEPHEN] WHEN THEY ARE CHALLENGED WITH THE GOSPEL?

Because of **ORIGINAL SIN: MAN DISOBEYED GOD IN THE BEGINNING AND BROUGHT SIN, SUFFERING, AND DEATH INTO THE WORLD** ...and because of **CONCUPISCENCE: A STRONG TENDENCY TOWARDS SIN AND EVIL WHICH RESULTS FROM ORIGINAL SIN**. Even though Baptism washes away the guilt of **ORIGINAL SIN**, after we have been Baptized, we still suffer from the effects of **CONCUPISCENCE**. John in his Gospel recalls Jesus’ words...

> THE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD,  
> BUT MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT  
> BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE WICKED.  
> EVERYONE WHO PRACTICES EVIL HATES THE LIGHT  
> FOR FEAR HIS DEEDS WILL BE EXPOSED  

[JN 3:19—20]

Think of how you feel when you have been in a dark room for a while. Your eyes adjust to the darkness and you begin to see more clearly in the darkness. If you suddenly turn on a bright light or go out into the sunlight, the light actually hurts your eyes. You experience a pain, and perhaps —for a moment— you wish there was not so much light. So it is with evil... a bad person gets used to evil and its pleasures, and after a while begins to resent and even hate good people who suggest they turn away from their evil ways. People like this may even begin to hate and persecute Jesus Christ and His Mystical Body—the Church... us! This is when we must learn to be brave and to keep Christ close...and to learn from Him. Jesus said, “LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.” If we, by God’s Grace, are able to do this, we may win over even those who are attacking the Church [as Stephen’s forgiveness and prayer won over Saul].

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The Story of Adam and Eve  
Boucicaut, 1415