

Paul sends letters to the Thessalonians

Joe Sarnicola/Contributing writer

BIBLE ACCENT

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were written to the Christian community in Thessalonica, in Greece. Many of the Jews in Greece resented the fact that Paul had established this church. After Paul and Silas fled from the city, Paul stayed in contact with the congregation by writing letters based on reports he received from Timothy, who was ministering to the Thessalonians. He wrote these letters to solve some of their religious conflicts and to encourage them in their faith.

ST. ANTHONY CLARET

Anthony Claret was born in Spain in 1807. Although he was working in his family's cloth-weaving business, he spent some of his time learning Latin and studying the art of printing.

He eventually entered a seminary and was ordained a priest in 1835. He had dreams of becoming a missionary, but health problems prevented him from doing so. He worked to spread the Gospel in his home country, and he founded the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Afterwards, Anthony was given the opportunity to become the archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, and served in the difficult and sometimes dangerous position until he returned to Spain to become confessor to Queen Isabella II. As a scholar, Anthony wrote about music, language and history. We remember him on Oct. 24.

Paul had established a new Christian church in Thessalonica, Greece, but there were some Jews there who were angry because of it. In order to escape the danger of their wrath, Paul left the city at night, when no one would see him. He was still concerned about his friends, so he sent Timothy to help them and to report back to him. When Timothy returned and told Paul of the situation in Thessalonica, Paul thought it would be helpful if he wrote a letter to the people in the church.

Paul looked over the report Timothy had written, as well as his own notes. Then he began writing.

"To the church of the Thessalonians: grace to you and peace. Silvanus, Timothy and I give thanks to God always for all of you. You became imitators of the Lord, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia. Our reception among you was not without effect. Rather, after we had suffered and had been insolently treated in Philippi, we drew courage through our God to speak to you the Gospel."

Paul stopped writing and stared out the window. He remembered the struggles in Philippi and the anger of some of the people in Thessalonica. As he thought, he tapped his finger on the table, as if he were listening to music. He stopped tapping, nodded his head as if agreeing with someone and began writing again.

"We were gentle among you, as a mother cares for her children. With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not on-

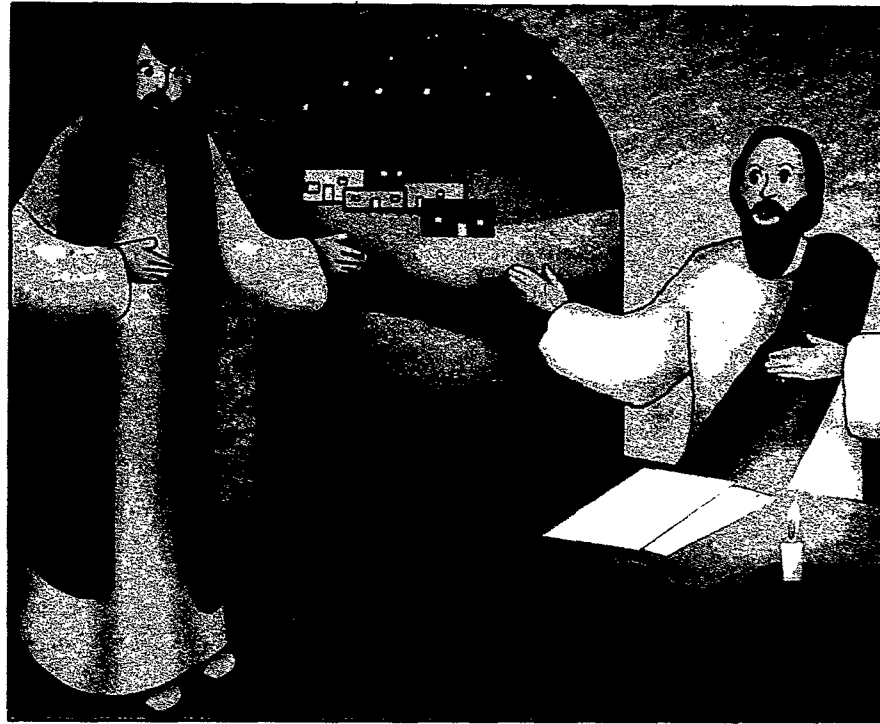


Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

ly the Gospel of God, but ourselves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. We treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

Paul read over what he had just written to be sure he had expressed himself exactly as he had intended to. He knew if his words were misunderstood, someone might be offended or he might accidentally cause some confusion within the Christian community in Thessalonica. Paul wanted his friends to

understand that any good they had done while they were with them was because of the love and power of God, not because of anything they themselves were able to do. He continued writing.

"Be at peace among yourselves. Cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Pray for us."

READ MORE ABOUT IT:
1 Thessalonians

Q&A

1. Why did Paul have to leave Thessalonica?
2. What did Paul tell the Thessalonians to do?

Puzzle

How many New Testament books can you find in the phrase below? Letters may be used only as often as they appear in the sentence. Answers on page 4.

May the Lord protect and strengthen you with his love.

Bible Trivia

Which New Testament book tells the story of Paul's conversion and ministry? Send answer to: Catholic Courier Bible Trivia, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Please include your name, address, school and grade. All entries must be received by Oct. 31, 2002. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted. The winner to the last trivia question was Amanda Widzinski, a seventh-grader at Gates-Chili Middle School. In answer to "How many sacraments are there in the church?" she responded, "There are seven sacraments in the church."

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