

OF SAUL AND THEN PAUL

Saint Paul was a late-comer in life to the feast-table of Truth. He had a good mind and was a very well-educated man. He was a hard-core Pharisee. He was determined and unrelenting in his determination to wipe out every trace of the strange religion left behind by the crucified Jesus. But Almighty God had other plans for this man. The trip to Damascus was a fateful occasion for him, and since that day when the mightiness of Christ first blinded him, Saul - now Paul - spent not one moment on himself. He had more calluses on his feet than a traveling peddler. He endured stoning, chains, prison, flagellation, shipwreck, exile, loneliness, and temptation. But having feasted at the table of Truth and having tasted the sweetness of it, he lashed himself to a holy zeal. Every moment of his life was given to and for Christ.

For Paul the late-comer much had to be accounted for. For Paul, no suffering, no labor, no hardship, was enough to pay his debt to God. The fruitful years of his apostolate dwindled to nothingness in his mind. The early years when he persecuted Christ, the years of his soul's blindness, loomed large. As long as he lived, the face of Stephen never left his mind's eye, and the part that he had played in that tragedy was always a source of sorrow for him.

In response to the persistent urgings of Timothy for him to slow down and rest his tired body, and take better care of himself, Paul gave thought only to the fact that he had so much to make up for - so much reparation to offer for the many lost years of his misdirected life.

If the ever great Saint Paul had such thoughts of himself, so much the more do we have reason to consider the same about ourselves. Let us be mindful that we too have much reason to give careful consideration to the fact that we also have so much to make up for, so much reparation to offer for the years in our lives that have been lost. □

"TAKE ON THE SHIELD OF FAITH"

Writing to his converts at Ephesus, St. Paul urged them to hold fast the faith they had received. He warned them to beware of the false teachers who were to come among them. As the soldiers of his time ward off the enemy's arrows by a shield that covered them from head to foot, so were the new and holy Christians to "take the shield of faith wherewith to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one."

To all of us - children of the "most wonderful" Third Millennium, of the "most enlightened" period of all time, a new age of peace, joy, happiness, and plenty and fulfillment - St. Paul might well give the same