



ST PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL

St. Paul Statue



The life-sized Statue of St. Paul captures the moment he recognizes Christ's call and his sword is transformed into a cross. It was created in limestone by artists from Washington National Cathedral, sculptor Jay Carpenter and master stone carver Vincent Palumbo.

Winston-Salem Journal reporter Freda Satterwhite wrote the following article about the statue on the Saturday before its dedication in 1989.

Sculpture Shows St. Paul in a Different Light

Typically, when St. Paul is depicted, he is shown before his conversion to Christianity as Saul, being knocked from his horse, and blinded for persecuting early Christians.

When sculptor Jay H. Carpenter was commissioned to create the statue of Paul for St. Paul's, he chose to show Paul in a more graceful light. "The basic concept is to show Paul after he's been converted in his heart and he's grappling in his mind with all the traditions he has to cast away to come to Christ," Carpenter said.

Carpenter, an artist-in-residence at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, has created more than 400 sculptures for the Washington Cathedral.

On Thursday and yesterday, Vincent Palumbo, the master carver for the Washington National Cathedral, worked with assistants to mount the 500-pound pedestal and the 5 1/2 foot tall statue of St. Paul in the church's sanctuary. The church will have three services Sunday – at 7:45 a.m., 9 a.m., and 11:15 a.m. – to dedicate the statue.

The statue, St. Paul in Damascus, was donated to the church by Meade H. Willis Jr., a retired executive from Wachovia Bank and the oldest active member of the church.

Willis had planned to leave money to the church to commission a statue after his death, but his family convinced him that the work should be done when he could make certain that it was done as he wanted it. Willis, 79, said: "A statue is the most exciting and truthful symbol you can have. Whatever Mr. Jay Carpenter had in his mind about religion and symbolism is in that statue."

Carpenter, 30, and Palumbo, 53, have been working on the statue for two years. It weighs nearly a ton and is carved out of Indiana limestone – the same rock used to build Saint Paul's church. Palumbo, 53, is a fifth generation stone carver. A native of Italy, he came to the United States when he was 25. He has worked at the Washington Cathedral for 28 years and has been the master carver for about 9 years.

"It (stone carving) wasn't my choice," Palumbo said. "It was my father's choice, my grandfather's choice, my great-grandfather's choice. It's a nice kind of work. It gives you a lot of satisfaction and a lot of aggravation."

Carpenter became interested in stone carving while attending school near the cathedral. Carpenter, then 17, worked at the cathedral sweeping floors that summer. He sculpted a gargoyle, which impressed the master carver. The carver recreated the gargoyle in limestone, and it is part of the cathedral today.

Carpenter said that he read several books about Paul in preparation for the sculpture because he did not know much about him.

"Paul is often depicted at the moment of his conversion, and he is blind and knocked from his horse," Carpenter said. "That's not the kind of image you want to see in the church week after week. I wanted to depict it after that, when he's still coming to grips with it."

His statue depicts Paul a short time after his conversion, as he struggles with his respect for the Mosaic law and revelations of Christ. In his right hand, Paul clutches the sword of Christian persecution. It is removed from his belt, and he holds it in the manner of a cross. His left hand seems to be searching – as is his mind – for answers.

"I tried to relate my own experiences as a Christian, Paul's experience and the common experience of Christianity," Carpenter said. "The common thread was the difficulty of faith. We all have a certain amount of baggage we bring with us and comfortable beliefs we have to shed to become Christian. In Paul's case, he had 1000 years of Jewish tradition."



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