



# April 21, 2010

The feast of ...



# Early days of the Church

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

# Early Days

Apostles get in trouble for preaching about Jesus in the Temple—arrested twice, escape by a miracle the first time, whipped the second, ordered to stop teaching, refuse to do so.

# The first deacons

1 At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.



The stoning of St.  
Stephen, deacon  
and proto-martyr

Stephen is so  
persuasive a preacher  
that some hate him  
and make fake  
charges of blasphemy  
against him

Stephen gives a long speech at his trial, which isn't a defense speech at all. He goes over the history of Israel and its faithlessness.

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it." When they heard this, they were infuriated, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, filled with the holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

# God works victory through defeat

The increasing persecution forces the Church to spread from its roots in Jerusalem and Israel in general.

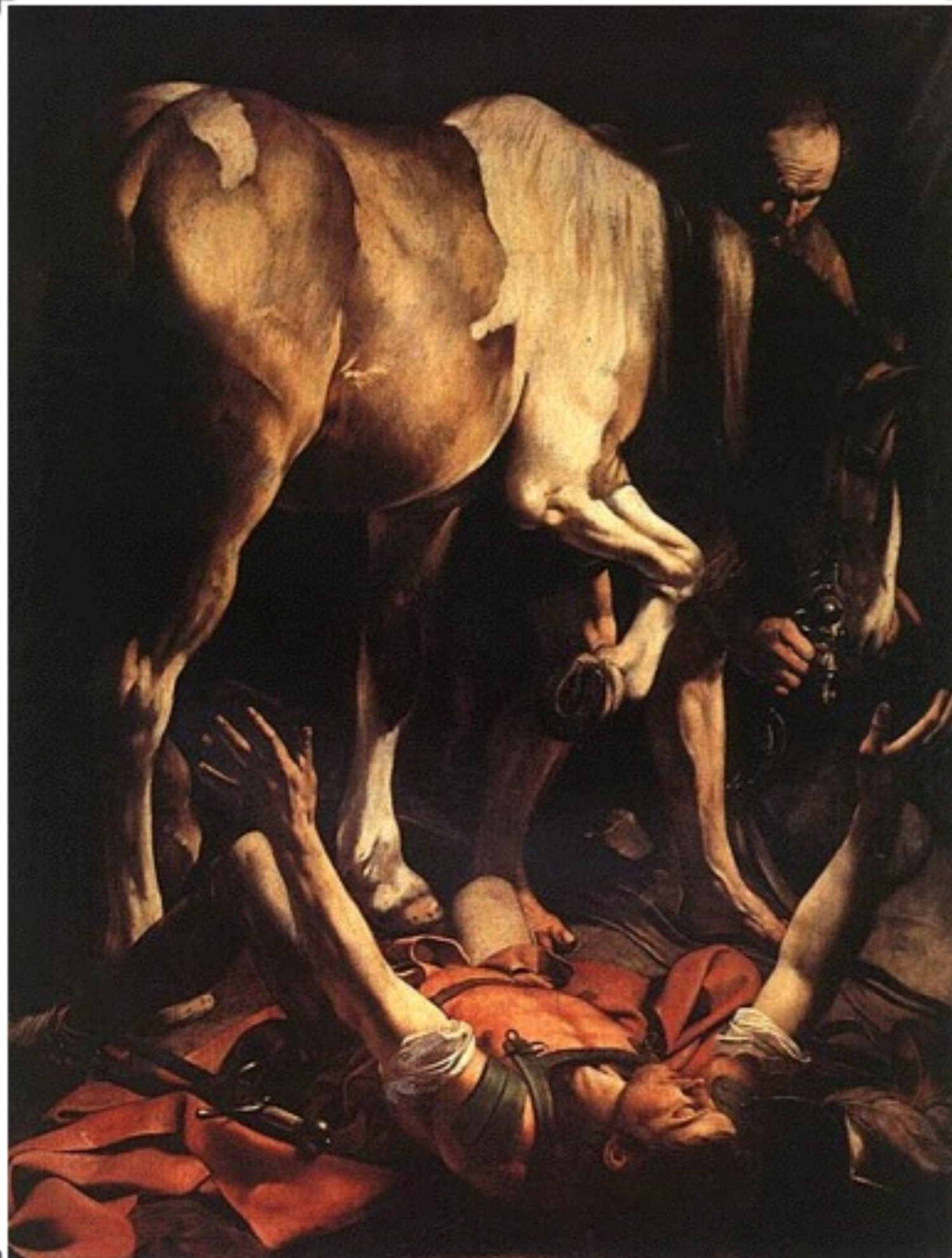
# Simon Magus

Acts 8:9-24

Simony: selling holy things, a very serious sin!

# The Ethipoian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40



# Peter and Cornelius

Acts 10

