What’s in a name?

Why does St Paul also have another name, Saul?

Saul was born into a Jewish family. His father was a Roman citizen so this meant Saul had Roman citizenship as well. Even though he was a Roman citizen, he lived in a Jewish community so he had a Jewish name.

Paul’s family were strict Pharisees, a group of Jews who followed the laws of Moses very closely. During his earlier life in a Jewish community,, a Jewish name like Saul would have been an appropriate name for him to go by.

The name Saul means “desired”. There had also been given to a king a long time ago, so Saul would have been considered a strong name. Unfortunately, this same king had acted in a very evil way towards David, so it may have had negative connotations too.

After Paul was converted on his way to Damascus, he changed his way of thinking about others. He no longer persecuted Christians and become a Christian himself. He travelled to other places and spent a lot of time with Gentiles (people who were not Jewish).

He chose to use the Roman name Paul, which means “small”. This name suited Paul after his conversion because he always tried to live a humble life like Jesus.

The story of Saul who became known as Paul is a good reminder that we can change our lives to be more like Jesus too.