



06.11.2019 Feast of Saint Barnabas, Apostle

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Barnabas. He was born in Cyprus and became a leading member of the church in Jerusalem. He had a reputation in the early church for giving encouragement to others. According to an earlier verse in the Acts of the Apostles, Barnabas' real name was Joseph, but he was given the name Barnabas, which means 'son of encouragement',

In the gospel reading, Jesus sends out the twelve apostles on mission within Galilee, to proclaim the good news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. In the first reading, the church of Antioch sends out Paul and Barnabas on a mission to places far beyond Antioch, to Cyprus and parts of modern-day Turkey. Paul and Barnabas were leading lights of the church in Antioch and yet the members of the church were happy to share these two leaders with others, far beyond their shores.

Of the two, Paul is better known to us because of his extraordinary missionary journeys and the many letters that have come down to us from him. Yet, Barnabas was very significant in another way. It was Barnabas who created an opening in the early church for Paul when others were still suspicious of him because of his past persecution of the church. As today's first reading says, it was Barnabas who went looking for Paul in Tarsus, his native city and brought him to Antioch because Barnabas saw that there was a great opening for Paul's gifts in this city where the gospel had been preached to pagans for the first time. Barnabas was what we can today an 'enabler'. It is not surprising that his nickname in the early church, according to the Acts of the Apostles, was 'son of encouragement'. That role of enabler or encourager remains a vital role in the church today. You could say that Barnabas was a facilitator, an enabler; he supported the good that people were doing and he opened doors for people's gifts.

We always need people like Barnabas around and we can all become a Barnabas for others. The ministry of encouragement is one in which we can all share, and it

is one of the most needed ministries today. On this his feast day, we pray for something of the spirit of Barnabas in our own lives and in the life of our church. We all have the capacity to create openings where the gifts of someone else can flourish for the service of the whole church. It takes a certain humility to create a space where others can flourish to their potential in the service of the Lord. It is the attitude of John the Baptist expressed in his comment with regard to Jesus, 'He must increase, but I must decrease'. The feast of Barnabas invites us to ask, 'What can I do for someone so that Jesus may increase today?'

Let us pray:

Lord, I do want to be used by You as you used St. Barnabas. I want to be facilitator, an enabler and create an opening for the service of the Church. I want to make a difference in this world. I give myself to You and Your service.

Jesus, I trust in You.