

June 11th: St. Barnabas, Apostle

Gospel text (Mt 10,7-13): Jesus said to his disciples, «Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper in your purses. Do not carry a traveler's bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or walking-stick: workers deserve their living. When you come to a town or a village, look for a worthy person and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, wish it peace. If the people in the house deserve it, your peace will be on them; if they do not deserve it, your blessing will come back to you».

«Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life...»

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Today, we celebrate the apostle Joseph, «a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means “Son of Encouragement”)» (Acts 4:36). He was generous from the beginning: «And who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet» (Acts 4:37). He brought St. Paul to the Apostles, who were afraid of him and, with Paul, they opened the apostolate to all peoples. First, in Antioch, where «when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord» (Acts 11:23-24). His apostolic zeal was an example, as he was putting into practice the Master's commandment: «Go and proclaim this message ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’» (Mt 10:7).

«Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them» (Acts 13:2), proclaimed the Holy Spirit: they went to Cyprus and Asia Minor, and

suffered greatly for their Lord. They had differences of opinion and even parted because of Mark, who quitted half of the way, and Paul did not accept him on their next journey; but Barnabas knew how to trust Mark and, later on, we will see him as a great collaborator of Peter and Paul.

Let us learn not to classify people into boxes, for «souls, like good wine, improve with time» (St. Josemaria), when we support them with our confidence and we love them, for «nobody can be really known unless we love him» (St. Augustine).

When we see somebody weakening or retreating, let us persevere just as Barnabas did, whose namesake also means “brave man”, and “he who encourages and enthuses”. These are characteristics very much in need of today. This is why we turn to the Lord with the words of the Collect: «God our Father, you filled St. Barnabas with faith and the Holy Spirit and sent him to convert the nations. Help us to proclaim the Gospel by word and deed».