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June 11: Saint Barnabas, Apostle

Gospel for June 11th, feast of Saint Barnabas the Apostle, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 10:7-13*)

Jesus said to his apostles:

“And preach as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves

his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart. As you enter the house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”

Commentary

The Gospel for the feast of the apostle Saint Barnabas presents a summary of some of the characteristics of the message that Jesus wants his apostles to transmit.

The message they are to preach is above all that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But Jesus right away adds a series of indications that make it clear that the apostolic mission is not reduced to the

transmission of information or doctrine.

In Saint Luke's version we are also offered a helpful guide: “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (*Lk 17:20-21*). The Kingdom of God is Jesus himself.

Hence our Lord is sending out his apostles with a message that is destined to become life; it is the embodiment of the message of the Incarnate Word. Therefore the signs that accompany it are charity (healing, raising from the dead, casting out demons), poverty (there is no need for gold, or even sandals), honest work that earns a fair salary, and the desire for peace in the homes they visit.

In summary, the apostles are to transmit the message of Jesus by living as our Lord himself lived.

The life of Saint Barnabas is a very attractive example of how to make that call of Christ a reality. The first reading tells us that he was a “good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith” (*Acts 11:24*). These qualities became especially evident in a gesture that changed forever the history of the Church. When Paul came to Jerusalem “he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus” (*Acts 9:26-27*).

The apostle whose feast we celebrate today was the one who introduced

Paul, the future Apostle to the Gentiles, into the life of the Church. And he did so because he was “filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith.”

From Saint Barnabas we can learn that we will be able to carry out the apostolic mission only if we are filled with the presence of the Paraclete. And the clearest expression of this will always be the charity with which we treat each soul, in the way that Jesus did.

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