

*The Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Vocation Group invites you and your family to read the story of one person who made a difference:*



## **St. Barnabas**



By parishioner Bob Day

St. Barnabas was born in Cyprus into a Jewish family, members of the tribe of Levi. His given name was Joseph. After his conversion, the first time we hear of him in the Scriptures is in Acts 4:36 when he sells a field he owns and gives all of the money to the Apostles. From then on, the Apostles called him "Barnabas" (Son of Encouragement). St. Barnabas played a pivotal role in the lives of both Saul (later "St. Paul") and John (later "St. Mark") – the author of the Gospel of Mark. St. Barnabas was a man of vision and a peacemaker who believed in giving second chances and encouragement to people so that they might reach their God-given potential.

Saul was an enemy and persecutor of the Church. On the road to Damascus, he was struck down and blinded by a light from heaven and heard the voice of Jesus say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:3-4). He was converted and baptized, and after three days he regained his sight. Following his conversion, the newly renamed Paul came to Jerusalem but, because of his past, most believers wanted nothing to do with him. Barnabas brought him to the others and vouched for his sincerity. Thanks to Barnabas, he was accepted.

John (Mark), a kinsman of Barnabas, accompanied him Paul and him on a mission trip, but did not complete the journey with them. This made Paul very angry. Later, while planning another mission trip, Barnabas again wanted to include Mark, but Paul refused. Because of this, there was dissension between Paul and Barnabas. So Paul took Silas with him and went one way, and Barnabas took Mark and went another way. The quarrel was later resolved, because Paul speaks of Mark as a valuable assistant in 2 Timothy 4:11, Colossians 4:10, and Philemon 24.

Barnabas was one of the first to understand that the mission of the Church was universal. He and Paul preached the Gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. This had far-reaching consequences: For example, should the Gentiles have to conform to Jewish laws of circumcision and dietary customs? The followers of Jesus were divided in their opinions. Paul, Barnabas, and others made a trip to Jerusalem and met with the Apostles and presbyters to discuss the issue. After a long debate, Peter got up and rendered the decision. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and joined all the faithful together by removing the differences between them with the words, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

There are two accounts of the death of St. Barnabas; one describes his death by fire, the other by stoning. According to tradition, St. Barnabas appeared in a dream to Bishop Anthemios of Cyprus in 478 and revealed to him the place of his sepulcher, located beneath a carob tree. The Bishop found the tomb and in it the remains of St. Barnabas with a manuscript of St. Matthew's Gospel on his breast. Bishop Anthemios moved the remains to a church, which he founded near the site. St. Barnabas is the patron saint of Cyprus.

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## **P R A Y F O R V O C A T I O N S**

Promoting vocations is the responsibility of everyone.

One person CAN make a difference!



**Blessed Mother Teresa**