

Daily Homily
St. Barnabas; Apostle, martyr
Memorial
Week Ten in Ordinary Time
11 June 2020
[USCCB Daily Reading](#)

What is in a name?

Pope Francis, Dr. Amy Acton, Donald Trump, Mother Theresa, Michael DeWine, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Deacon Bob Herron, Carl and Norine Woost, St. Brendan the Navigator. Behind each of these names is a conversation. Behind each letter, in between each space of a letter, in the space before the name and after the name are countless stories to be told, experiences that have been had, breaths that have been breathed, laughs that have been laughed, and tears that have been shed. Behind each of these names are issues, conflicts, controversies even ... as well as, grace, great acts, accomplishments, friendship, love. All of this and so much more are held in a simple name.

Barnabas.

Today is his day. Today we remember him and his name. His name is honored by the Church for what he did and for who he is. He knew the original apostles. He traveled and hobnobbed with Paul. He actually convinced the Christian community at Jerusalem to accept Paul as a true believer, given Paul's reputation for persecuting Christians. Barnabas put in overtime on frequent flier miles. He has a travelogue that is as long and extensive as St. Brendan's. All of this is reported in the Acts of the Apostles. He started off with the Apostles by selling his property and giving the funds to them. He followed them. He did what they did, trained under them, journeyed with them. He was able to go on his own – along with his cousin, John Mark, and of course, Paul, himself. He was confident that he was representing the fellowship of the Apostles and speaking in Jesus' name. They must have been confident that he would do so effectively as well. He went from place to place persuading, preaching, convincing, supporting, helping. In each place there was acceptance and in each place there was also opposition. There is no report that Barnabas ever saw Jesus, that, like Paul, he had any vision of Jesus. He came to know Jesus through the work and the lives of Jesus' followers. He was compelled to follow as well. Just like us today.

This is what is behind the name, "Barnabas."

However, here is the twist. Barnabas is not his "real" name. His given name is Joseph. Yes, Joseph is a good enough name, I guess. After all, it belonged to Jesus' foster father. However, in biblical times when one marks a significant change, when one marks a new direction or a new course, one is given a new name. We see this all the time: Simon is called Peter or Rock, Saul becomes Paul, and you, at Confirmation, took on a new name – what is that name again? Well, this is what happened to Barnabas. When Joseph sold all that he had to follow Jesus, he was given a new name to mark the new life and the new occasion. Barnabas is his name.

Behind each letter, in between each space, in the space before his name and after his name tells the story of the heart and life of this Apostles. The name itself means, "Son of Encouragement." So he was. He was the embodiment of encouragement to the Apostles and to those Christian communities in which he spent time and prayer.

What is the Catholic Christian story behind your name?

A quote that caught my attention this week... it applies to what is above:

Do you live your resume or your eulogy?

--David Brooks, TED TALK, 14 April 2014

