



Memorial of St Barnabas, apostle



Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Acts 11:21b–26, 13:1–3 (Proper)

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1–6 | **Response:** Psalm 98:2b

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 25:4b, 5a

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:17–19

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Some saints shine brightly in the spotlight. Others are content to stand nearby, holding the light steady for someone else. Today, the Church asks us to notice Barnabas—a man whose name means son of encouragement. He didn’t try to be the centre of the story. But he made it possible for others to become what God was calling them to be.

When the Church in Jerusalem heard that something unexpected was happening in Antioch—that Gentiles were turning to the Lord—they didn’t send a watchdog. They sent Barnabas. A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And when Barnabas arrived, Luke tells us, he saw the grace of God—and he rejoiced.

That line is worth sitting with: he saw grace—and rejoiced. He didn’t try to control it. He didn’t doubt it just because it didn’t follow the old path. He didn’t worry about where he fit into it. He simply recognised that God was doing something—and gave thanks.

And then, instead of trying to do everything himself, he went looking for Saul. The man others still feared. The one whose story wasn’t easy. Barnabas brought him in, walked with him, and shared the mission. They taught together. Prayed together. Grew the Church together. And it was there—among people from different cultures and backgrounds—that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

This is what encouragement really looks like. Not flattery. Not avoiding hard conversations. But standing beside someone, seeing the grace in them, and helping them trust it. Encouragement is a quiet kind of courage.

John O’Malley called this the ministry of consolation. And in our Ignatian tradition, that means even more than offering comfort. It means helping others to notice where God is. It means gently turning someone’s gaze back toward hope. And that is not a small gift. It is one of the most needed gifts in the world.

The psalm today invites us to sing a new song to the Lord. Not because the old one was bad—but because God is always doing something fresh. A new song might mean opening our hearts to someone different. Letting go of old ideas that no longer give life. Welcoming new cultures, new voices, new ways of loving and following Jesus. Barnabas sang a new song—not with music, but with mercy. Not with power, but with presence.

And we are not just singing that new song alone. We are about to come to the table together—to the Eucharist. The place where Christ gives himself to us again and again. The place where we are consoled, strengthened, and sent. In the Eucharist, we are reminded that encouragement is not something we have to make up on our own. It flows from Christ. It is his gift, and it becomes ours to share.

And today, we give thanks for our brother Micheé Domingos, as he turns 28. We thank God not just for his life, but for his quiet encouragement in this community—his steadiness, his kindness, his joy. He reminds us that encouragement often comes without noise, but never without meaning.

In the Gospel, Jesus says he has not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them. To fill them to the brim. He doesn’t cancel what came before. He completes it with mercy. Barnabas did that too—rooted in tradition, but open to the Spirit’s surprises.

And maybe that’s our invitation today. To stand where Barnabas stood. Between what we’ve inherited and what God is unfolding. With trust. With humility. With eyes open for grace.

So I invite you to carry these three questions with you into prayer this week:

- Who has encouraged me when I needed it most—and how can I pass that gift on?
- Where do I see God moving around me right now—and am I willing to rejoice in it, even if it doesn’t come through me?

- What small act of encouragement is Christ asking of me this week? A word, a presence, a silence, a gesture?

And now, as we prepare to receive Christ in the Eucharist—our strength, our consolation—we turn to him again. Not as strangers. Not as servants. But as friends in the Lord. Let us offer him all that we are and all that we have, with this simple prayer of surrender, which I invite us to pray together:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will— All I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me.
(Spiritual Exercises §234)

Amen.

And just one last word. I think many of us are here today because someone once encouraged us. Maybe it was a quiet word. A teacher who saw something in us. A friend who stayed close when others walked away. Maybe it was someone like Barnabas. Or maybe it was Barnabas himself, whispering through their voice. Don't forget how powerful that was. And don't underestimate the same gift in your own hands.

Let's go and sing that new song—gently, faithfully, together.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.