



Homily

for the Memorial of Saint Barnabas the Apostle at the closing of the Plenary Council of the Order

Santa Maria degli Angeli, June 11, 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today we celebrate here at Santa Maria degli Angeli and at the conclusion of the Order's Plenary Council the memorial of Saint Barnabas, the apostle we perhaps know least but who has much to teach us. His name means "son of consolation" and this already tells us everything: he was one who knew how to see the good in others, who encouraged, who made hope be reborn. A humble figure who accompanied the beginnings of the Church, without ever putting himself at the center of the scene.

The humility that recognizes gifts

Think of the scene that Saint Luke tells us today in Acts: in Antioch something extraordinary is happening. The pagans, those who had never entered a synagogue, are embracing the Gospel. The Church of Jerusalem sends Barnabas to see what is happening. And he, when he arrives, instead of worrying, instead of putting up barriers, **rejoices**. He sees the grace of God at work and is filled with joy.

But Barnabas does more. He remembers that fiery young man he had met years before: Saul of Tarsus, the one who before persecuted Christians. Many still didn't trust him. But Barnabas had seen something in Paul's eyes, had recognized his gifts. And so he makes a revolutionary gesture: he goes to look for him in Tarsus.

Picture him, Barnabas, walking through the streets of Tarsus, asking: "Where is Paul? I need him to announce the Gospel to the pagans." How much humility! How much wisdom! He wasn't afraid of being overshadowed by someone younger and more brilliant than him. He had understood that the mission is bigger than our egos.

Two by two, as Jesus asks

And so begins their preaching **two by two**, just as Jesus had asked in the Gospel we have just heard. Not alone, not like solitary wolves, but together. Because the Gospel is announced in fraternity, in relationship, in the complementarity of gifts.



And they do it in the sign of **gratuitousness**: "Freely you have received, freely give," says Jesus. No gold, no silver, no heavy bags. Only the essential: the peace of Christ to bring to homes, the Word that heals, the presence that consoles.

Starting again two by two in our time

Dear brothers, many of us live in places where the Church is increasingly marginal. We are no longer at the center of society, often our voice seems to interest no one. It's easy to get discouraged, to fold in on ourselves, to complain that "once it was different."

But it's precisely here that Saint Barnabas shows us the way: **to start again two by two**. Not alone, not in large structures that make noise but don't bring life. Two by two, in small fraternities that choose the Gospel anew as the center of their life.

Like Barnabas, we are called to **lighten our burdens**. How many dead weights we carry with us! How many structures that once served and today have become cages! How many "golds, silvers and bags" that slow us down on the journey! The Gospel asks us for freedom, lightness, agility to reach the "areopaguses" of our time: the places where people live, suffer, hope.

Questions for the journey

Even the structures of our Order exist for life and the announcement of the Gospel. The rest is extra. And so, dear brothers, allow me to ask you some questions that interrogate me as well:

Will we know how to free ourselves from so many dead weights to rediscover the freedom and freshness of our vocation? **Will we know how to re-motivate ourselves** again to respond to the call according to our charism, letting fall what no longer serves?

Will we know how to believe that our charism is alive and awaits to be even more so today, through our humble and courageous response?

Like Barnabas, we can have the courage to go look for the "Pauls" of our time: young people who have fire in their hearts but no one values them; wounded people who could become extraordinary witnesses; those who have hidden talents that are only waiting to be recognized, the seekers of God of our time, who often don't know who and how to seek.

The peace we bring

The Gospel tells us: "If that house is worthy, let your peace descend upon it." The peace we bring is not ours, it is Christ's. It is that peace that is born from the certainty that following the Lord Jesus gives us freedom, not chains.



In these days of fraternity, research and common prayer that we have lived together, we have experienced the gift of being Church. Now we return to our places, but not as we came. We return carrying this word of peace and freedom to our brothers and to so many others.

Conclusion

Saint Barnabas teaches us that greatness does not lie in protagonism, but in knowing how to recognize and make grow the gifts of others. True evangelical authority is that of one who knows how to step aside so that Christ may grow, of one who knows how to go look for hidden talents to put them at the service of the Kingdom.

Like him, we choose gratuitousness against the logic of profit. Like him, we choose simplicity against useless accumulation. Like him, we choose fraternity against individualism.

And as Saint Paul writes: "I will announce to the brothers the salvation of the Lord." This is our joy, this is our task, this is our peace.

Amen.

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