



From the Lecturer's Desk

A quick refresher this month on the names and accomplishments of the apostles. There is of course Peter, the first pope. We know the Gospel authors: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Andrew was Peter's brother and was one of the first men called. James the Greater was John's brother; together Christ called them the "Sons of Thunder" – these are Zebedee's sons. There was Thomas [also called Didymus], who doubted that Christ had truly risen. Jude [sometimes called Thaddaeus] wrote the last of the epistles and was the brother of James the Less who was also an epistle writer as well as bishop of the Jerusalem church. We can be forgiven if we're not sure about Simon – Simon the Zealot; people get him confused with Simon Peter a lot. We also might not remember Matthias who was chosen to take Judas' place. We all know St. Paul and of course the apostle Barnabas whose feast we celebrate June 11th. Wait. "There was an apostle Barnabas", you might ask ... "I don't recall that name in any of the Gospels". Like Paul, he isn't in the Gospels and barely mentioned in the epistles. Nevertheless, there was indeed an apostle Barnabas, and he plays an important role in the early church. We celebrate his feast day June 11th.

He was a native of Cyprus and a Levite. As a Levite, he spent a good deal of his time in Jerusalem studying [it's said he was a student of Rabbi Gamaliel, and that one of his classmates was Saul of Tarsus] and serving at the temple. Some traditions have him as one of the first and chief among the 72 disciples who followed Christ, were familiar with his ministry and message, and were sent out to Jewish communities to invite others to follow Christ.

Most of what we know of him comes from the Acts of the Apostles. He was a member of the Jerusalem community. To help support that community, he sold an estate he had inherited and gave the proceeds to the community. He was the most respected man in the first century after the Apostles themselves.

When Saint Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, he was not received by the church. He sought out Barnabas, his old classmate. Barnabas introduced Paul to Peter and James [the lesser]. Barnabas was so well respected and trusted, that Saint Peter received Paul into his own house where Paul lived for some time. Paul then returned to Tarsus.

When word reached Jerusalem that a large community of believers had formed in Antioch, the apostles sent Barnabas to see to their needs. His preaching added yet more members to the community. Barnabas sent word to Paul in Tarsus to come to Antioch to help him. Together Paul and Barnabas were given the title of "Apostles of the

Gentiles. Although that title is more often associated with Paul, it is one they shared. Barnabas, already a respected senior member of the Jerusalem community would play a great role in the development of the early church. Barnabas returned to his native Cyprus to preach the Good news. He was martyred there, being stoned to death in the year 61.