

Acts 9:26-27

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

NIV

Can you imagine the look on the disciples faces when Saul entered the room? Here was one of the chief persecutors of Christians. I suspect that if I were there I'd thought a raid was imminent.

Yet Paul is does not come in by himself, he is brought in by Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement" accompanies him. Barnabas was well respected by the apostles (see Acts 4:36-37). His presence paves the way for Saul, and the rest is history. Saul "aka" Paul eventually become partners, in the missionary endeavor. Finally in the book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas part company over John Mark, whom went with them before, but left them on a previous mission. Characteristically Barnabas argues for John Mark, but Paul will have none of it, and takes someone else.

We need to give thanks for the Barnabas of our society, and let us be a Barnabas to others.

When I made the transition from one denomination to another, it was the person who suggested the change to me that began to suggest meetings to attend, and introduce me to clergy. It saved a bit of awkwardness in the process.

When I was conference dean in Upstate New York, I would try hard to make new clergy feel welcome.

In one of the congregations I served there was one gentleman who was extremely good at greeting new folk and making them feel at ease. I dare say his manner accounted for a number of new members in the congregation.

Who are the "Barnabases" in your life? How can you be a "Barnabas" to others?

Your never know how God will use you to change someone's life for the better. May we be so available to God, that how ever big or small, our "act of encouragement" will be blessing to that person and to others.

Pr. John Van Haneghan