

Grace Notes in Miniature,

Thursday June 11th, 2020

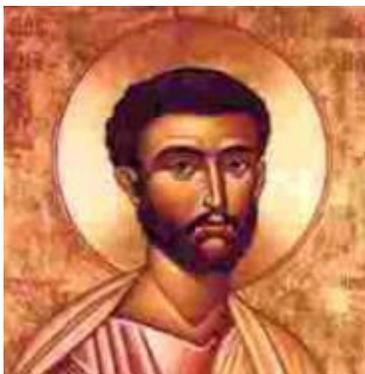
Dear Friends:

As I was reading through Aleteia today, my attention was caught by an article entitled, “A psalm that can help you control your tongue”.

https://aleteia.org/cp1/2020/06/09/a-psalm-that-can-help-you-control-your-tongue/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en

The article was about being attentive to what we say and I felt it picked up very well on a couple of the comments I made yesterday when I was talking about prayer and then added a few more. It made the point that “the ability to speak is not measured by the quantity of words, but by the love they convey” and quoted the *Epistle of James*: We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. – James 3:2-5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anVweXDcxhA>

The Psalm to which the writer refers is #141, which may be familiar as the “incense psalm at Evening Prayer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8LyZ2SID_U The second verse prays, “Set a guard, LORD, before my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips.” and reminds us that there are occasions when we should think about what we say as words have the capacity to wound even when we didn’t intend to do so. A remark which seemed witty or inconsequential can be mis- or re-interpreted or passed on as gossip and cause a lot of distress. In recent years we have been made aware of the danger of a misspoken word as comments reiterated in social media have resulted in very tragic outcomes. But let’s not forget that words also have the capacity to carry great positive meanings.



Today, in our calendar of the saints, we remember St Barnabas, sent to Antioch to preach to the people who had become believers. His name was initially Joseph; however, the apostles changed his name to Barnabas, meaning ‘man of comfort’ or ‘man of encouragement’, a title he quickly grew to deserve. He then became instrumental in receiving St Paul into the Christian community and continued to travel around the Gentile world evangelising the people as one of Paul’s ministers. There is an *Epistle of Barnabas* which is not in our canon of scripture, but which was found in the *Codex Sinaiticus* (a 4th C. Christian manuscript), between the *Gospels* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, another Christian literary work of the late



2nd C. CE. It is thought to be roughly contemporary with Matthew, Luke and John, dating between the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the Jewish Revolt in 132 CE. It contains an analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures, explaining to Christian converts what they mean in the Christian context, and writings to the Gentiles similar to the content of the 'Didache' – an early book for Christians about the teachings of Jesus.

Many words have specialised meanings in the context of faith. An Epistle is a communication in the form of a letter; 'gospel' is from the Old English 'god' 'spel', or good news, and is the English translation of 'euangelion' (Greek) or 'evangelium' (Latin). The word 'evangelise' means to bring good news and comes from the same Greek root; also consider the word 'angel, from the same root. The evangelists then and to this day have had to be skilled with the spoken word in order to convey the message of Jesus in a way which invites/incites others to follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj6Z27h7O5k>



In a meeting yesterday afternoon I was intrigued to hear Norm Roberts, a Vice-Principal at Bishop Reding, compare the work of Paul to an experience of distance learning: Paul visited a community, began to teach the people and then maintained their catechesis – religious instruction – through sending letters. That his Epistles to the communities and to some of his delegates like Timothy, Titus and Philemon, and those written by James, Peter, John and Jude are still a source of instruction and direction for us speaks of the mastery of the language with which they are written.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaCGyCiuNJs> If we are able to think in that context, we can find in his words inspiration and courage for the journey in faith and education we are undertaking with our communities at this time.

When we go on to read the Gospel for today, Matthew 10:7-13, we see that the Twelve were sent forth by Jesus with very little in the way of supplies or equipment and with a very big job to do: proclaim the good news...cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Remember that these were simple men, probably mostly illiterate, with only their faith in Jesus to guide them in the tasks which he was asking them to do in his name. The same faith we share. Our theological theme asks us in Jesus' voice: **Do you love me? Feed my lambs.** If we pay attention to the model of Paul, Barnabas and James, we will have the words and courage to share the Good News. May you feel the presence of Jesus as you continue to live out your vocation in Catholic education. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chqY9S1Lm2w>

With every blessing, Gillian