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A Precious Seed

The Son of Consolation



This month we celebrate the memory of Apostle Barnabas, of Cypriot origin and co-founder of the Church in Cyprus with Saint Paul and Saint Mark the Evangelist.

He was called Joseph, and Barnabas means “Son of Consolation”.

Indeed, Barnabas played a very important role in the nascent Church.

He has been the link between the Church in Jerusalem and Paul, and it was he who made Paul meet the Apostles. (*Acts 9, 27*).

He, also, steadied the bonds of the Church in Jerusalem –consisting mainly of Jewish origin Christians, with that of Antioch (Northern Syria) where the majority of the faithful were of ethnic origin, i.e. non-Jews.

He accompanied Paul in his first Apostolic journey to Cyprus.

It was in his native land, namely in the outskirts of the rich city of Salamis, that according to tradition Barnabas was martyred, in the year 61A.D., sealing in this way his total offering of his life to Christ and the Gospel.

Barnabas’s life and work are part of this precious seed which bears fruit and builds up the Church through the ages.

As it was then so it is nowadays: all Christians have an important role to play in the Church and the world.

We must become the “link” connecting the Church with those who sincerely seek the face of God.

In order to do so, however, we need to be in a living and intimate relation with the Risen Lord, in faith, hope and love.

The spreading of the word of God

The word of God continued to increase and spread. When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them".

So after they had fasted and prayed they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

When they arrive at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

(Acts, 12: 24– 13: 5)

In the course of history



Salamis was the capital of Cyprus for about one thousand years and, according to tradition, it was founded by **Teukros**, son of Telamon— king of the island of Salamis (in Attica, near Athens), and brother of Ajax, who arrived to Cyprus with other Greeks at the end of the Trojan war.

During the Roman era, Salamis was part of the Roman province of **Cilicia** and the seat of the governor was moved to the city of **Paphos**.

Although Salamis ceased to be the capital of the island, having been replaced by Paphos, its wealth and importance did not diminish.

In the 4th century A.D. great earthquakes destroyed Salamis.

The city was rebuilt by Emperor Constance (337-361 A.D.) and became episcopal see. Its most famous bishop is **Saint Epiphanius** (315-403 A.D.) one of the Fathers of the Church.

It was exempt from taxes for a certain period so it could be rebuilt, however, at a smaller scale.

Over time, the debris carried to the sea by the river Podieos blocked the port and was detrimental to the future of the city.

Salamis was gradually abandoned in the 7th century, due to the Arab invasions.

Its inhabitants founded nearby the city of Arsinoe, which became the modern-day Famagusta.

Salamis of Cyprus



At times the midday sun, at others handfuls of light rain and the coast full of shards of pottery. Insignificant columns—only Saint Epiphanius pointing, in the grayness, buried, the golden empire's power.

Then I heard steps upon the gravel. No faces did I see—they were gone as I turned. But a voice heavy as a walk in the blazing heat lingered there in the veins of the sky, in the rolling sea, among the pebbles again and again.

Now, it is better to forget upon this gravel— no use in speaking— the opinion of the powerful; who can change? Who can listen? Everyone separately dreams and does not hear the other person's nightmare.

Yes, but the herald runs—no matter how long the road might be. He will bring to those who tried Hellespont to chain the terrible message of Salamis: the voice of the Lord upon the waters.

It is an island.

George Seferis, Salamis, Cyprus, November '53, excerpts

Did you know...



The word **Salamis** (Modern Greek **Salam-ina**) is etymologically derived from the ancient Greek roots **als (sal) (=sea) + min-ys (= small)**.

The root **als** gives us the Greek **alas** (modern Greek **alati**) (=salt). This root exists in all European languages as **sal** hence we get the English word **salt**, the French **sel**, the Dutch **zout** etc.

In the ancient Greek Doric dialect we have the word **salassa (=thalassa)** which means the **sea**, **saleuomai** (=I move in waves) and **saleia** (wave-like movement).

One has but to attentively listen to the sound the wave makes as it breaks at the beach moving as it does the gravel and sand; it is a periodical saars... (l=r)

The well-spring which quenches our thirst



The Holy Spirit is:

The Breath which gives life to the Church,
The Wind which brings forth the new,
The Harmony which holds everything together,
The Bond which unites us all,
The Beauty of innocence,
The Light which shows us the Glory of God,

The Inspiration of everything good,
The Purpose of Mission,
The Faithful Friend who surrounds us with his protection,
The Fire which purifies us,
The Flame which sanctifies us,
The Well-spring which quenches our thirst,

The Ocean which cleanses us,
The Strength which arms us,
The Suavity hidden at the Cross,
The Love which leads us to the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity

Dry ground?

The big problem that confronts Christianity today is not Christ's enemies.

Persecution has never done much harm to the inner life of the Church as such.

The real religious problem exists in the souls of those who in their hearts believe in God, and who recognize their obligation to love Him and serve Him—yet do not!

The world we live in is dry ground for the seed of God's Truth.

A modern city is not altogether a propitious place in which to try to love God.

You cannot love Him unless you know Him. And you cannot come to know Him unless you have a little time and a little peace in which to pray and think about Him and study His truth.

Everything we do in the service of God has to be vitalized by the supernatural power of His grace.

And grace is granted us in proportion as we dispose ourselves to receive it by the interior activity of the theological virtues: faith, hope and love.

(Thomas Merton, "The Ascent to Truth", 1951, pg. 4)

The Gospel of the Holy Spirit



The book of the New Testament of **The Acts of the Apostles** could be called the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit".

It mainly describes the acts as well as the words of the Apostles, in particular those of the two chief Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Its author is Saint Luke the Evangelist and its purpose is to show how the light of the Gospel was transmitted from city to city, and so from the Mother Church in Jerusalem it passed onto the pagan world; it traversed the whole Empire and, finally, reached its centre, namely, Rome.

The spread of Christianity is the work of the Holy Spirit, who appears during all the "Acts" active, guiding and empowering the nascent Church.

At Pentecost the Church was born; but Pentecost has never ceased: the work of the Holy Spirit goes on fulfilling the promise of Christ:

"I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever— the Spirit of Truth" (John 14, 16)