

Barnabas

Last week the Church honored St. Barnabas, ‘the son of consolation and encouragement’ who empowered St. Paul to fulfill his mission to the Gentiles. Barnabas seemed little concerned with his success; though both he and Paul were granted apostolic titles (Acts 14:14), Barnabas ignited Paul then flamed out into early martyrdom. He did his part as a servant leader.

Also last week, we sponsored our sixth annual Living Waters Training in Latin America (Aguas Vivas), this time in Guadalajara Mexico. At the helm was Daniel Delgado. What struck me about Daniel’s leadership was the way he encouraged everyone to do his or her part. He rejoiced in others’ joy in serving Jesus. He served others without complaint in order to help ensure their success. He did not get lost in whatever losses he incurred. He is a type of Barnabas for Aguas Vivas.

This was only Daniel’s fourth Aguas Vivas Training. Up until two years ago, he struggled to speak Spanish. In a relatively short time he has integrated his Mexican-American heritage, now speaks in the tongue of his forefathers, and authentically embodies the Latino spirit.

It is natural for him to come alongside a range of Latin Americans who seek to offer their brokenness to Jesus and others; given his transgender background, Daniel knows how personal transformation of identity releases healing for all. Like Barnabas in Antioch, Daniel in Guadalajara ‘saw God’s grace at work and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart. For he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith’ (Acts 11:23, 24).

This was a hard year for Aguas Vivas. Our blessed friends in Puerto Rico were devastated by Hurricane Maria and are still mobilizing to continue the work of Living Waters there. (It is miraculous that the biggest delegation from the island came to be trained last week.) Yet other seasoned leaders could not join us due to unusual obligations or had moved onto other forms of service. At times I wondered if our Mexican plans would be realized. Daniel is a deep healer and hard worker but not an administrator per se. Could he pull this off?

Not alone. He assembled an amazing team of Aguas Vivas leaders from the Guadalajara area. Meric, Francisco, Veronica and Father Ricardo share Daniel’s heart of servant leadership while possessing gifts he does not. Together the team did an excellent job, so much so that I evaluate this training as the most peaceful and effective we’ve yet experienced in Latin America. A cohesive team, coordinated by a man motivated by others’ success: thank you St. Barnabas for your witness of encouragement. Thank you, Daniel, for embodying that witness.