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He was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit

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" He was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith." Acts 11:23

The bane of bus riders is having a dollar bill that won't flow into the slot because it is too wrinkled. The machine beeps loudly until you get it right, and the line of people behind you, especially those with automatic swipe cards, send a collective message for you to get with it. A crisp new dollar is hard to find. From printer to shredder, most paper money must live a rugged life, all those George Washingtons jammed into pockets, used in thousands of small transactions, folded and crumpled over and over before being retired.

Just as trustworthy currency is the basis for a whole economy, reliable people are the measure of a sound religion. What good is a church that doesn't result in good people? Barnabas, in today's reading from Acts, is called "a good man filled with the Holy Spirit and faith." He teams up with another good man, the recent convert Saul, at Antioch in Syria, and they head out on the first of the missionary journeys that established the gospel outside of Jewish Palestine. It is at Antioch, we are told, that the followers of Jesus are called "Christians" by outsiders impressed by their love for one other.

It is heartwarming to think that this is how the church got started. The preaching of Paul and Barnabas was important, but it was only credible because it built on the example of love. This is an evangelization we all can do, to live each ordinary day in such a way that people observing us will say, "See the love."

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