

Sunday 24 June 2018 ~ The Nativity of St John The Baptist
"The hand of the Lord was with him"

Reading 1: Isaiah 49:1-6
Reading 2: Acts 13:22-26

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 139:1-3, 13-15
Gospel reading : Luke 1:57-66, 80

Gospel reading: *Luke 1:57-66, 80*

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbours and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marvelled. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Meditation:

Birthdays are a special time to remember and give thanks for the blessings that have come our way. In many churches of the East and West the birth of John the Baptist is remembered on this day. The friends of Zechariah and Elizabeth marveled at the wonderful way in which God blessed them with a child. This child was destined by God for an important mission. The last verses in the last book of the Old Testament, taken from the prophet Malachi, speak of the Lord's messenger, the prophet Elijah who will return to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6).

Birth and mission of John the Baptist: We see the beginning of the fulfilment of this word when the Angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah the marvellous birth and mission of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17). When this newly born child was about to be named, as customary on the eighth day, his relatives quibbled over what name to give him. (Don't relatives today often do the same when the time comes for naming a new born?) This child, however has been named from above! And Elizabeth is firm in her faith and determined to see that God be glorified through this child. The name John means "the Lord is gracious". In the birth of John and in the birth of Jesus the Messiah we see the grace of God breaking forth into a world broken by sin and without hope. John's miraculous birth shows the mercy and favour of God in preparing his people for the coming of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's life was fuelled by one burning passion - to point others to Jesus Christ and to the coming of God's kingdom. Scripture tells us that John was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, John leapt in the womb of Elizabeth as they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). The fire of the Spirit dwelt in John and made him the forerunner of the coming Messiah. John was led by the Spirit into the wilderness prior to his ministry where he was tested and grew in the word of God. John's clothing was reminiscent of the prophet Elijah (see Kings 1:8). John broke the prophetic silence of the previous centuries when he began to speak the word of God to the people of Israel. His message was similar to the message of the Old Testament prophets who chided the people of God for their unfaithfulness and who tried to awaken true repentance in them. Among a people unconcerned with the things of God, it was his work to awaken their interest, unsettle them from their complacency, and arouse in them enough good will to recognize and receive Christ when he came.

God's gracious gift to us: What is the significance of John the Baptist and his message for our lives? When God acts to save us he graciously fills us with his Holy Spirit and makes our faith come "alive" to his promises. Each and every day the Lord is ready to renew us in faith, hope, and love. Like John the Baptist, the Lord invites each of us to make our life a free-will offering to God. God wants to fill us with his glory all the days of our lives, from birth through death. Renew the offering of your life to God and give him thanks for his mercy and favour towards you.

The elderly Elizabeth gave birth to the last of the prophets, and Mary, a young girl, to the Lord of the angels. The daughter of Aaron gave birth to the voice in the desert (Isaiah 63:9), but the daughter of David to the strong God of the earth. The barren one gave birth to him who remits sins, but the Virgin gave birth to him who takes them away (John 1:29). Elizabeth gave birth to him who reconciled people through repentance, but Mary gave birth to him who purified the lands of uncleanness. The elder one lit a lamp in the house of Jacob, his father, for this lamp itself was John (John 5:35), while the younger one lit the Sun of Justice (Malachi 4:2) for all the nations. The angel announced to Zechariah, so that the slain one would proclaim the crucified one and that the hated one would proclaim the envied one. He who was to baptize with water would proclaim him who would baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). The light, which was not obscure, would proclaim the Sun of Justice. The one filled with the Spirit would proclaim concerning him who gives the Spirit. The priest calling with the trumpet would proclaim concerning the one who is to come at the sound of the trumpet at the end. The voice would proclaim concerning the Word, and the one who saw the dove would proclaim concerning him upon whom the dove rested, like the lightning before the thunder."

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Are you grateful for the ways that God has worked in your life, even from your birth? How have you shown him that you are grateful?
2. What is the mission in your life? How much of that mission is guided by and embedded within the teachings of our Church?
3. How can I be more like John the Baptist – point others to Jesus Christ and to eternal life in our God's Kingdom?

"Lord Jesus, you bring hope and salvation to a world lost in sin, despair, and suffering. Let your grace refresh and restore your people today in the hope and joy of your great victory over sin and death."

Source: www.dailyscripture.net, author [Don Schwager](#)