

June 24th Nativity of John B

Is 49:1-6
Acts 13:22-26
Lk 1:57-66, 80

In today's liturgy, we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist. This feast was celebrated from the 4th Century. There are only three birthdays celebrated liturgically: (1) the birth of Jesus, (2) the birth of our Blessed Mother, and (3) the birth of John the Baptist. The Church always celebrated the feasts of saints on the day of their death because on that day they were reborn to eternal life. We celebrate the birth of John the Baptist because of his uniqueness as a prophet. He was sanctified in his mother's womb and was filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. Before his birth, he was visited by Christ who was in Mary's womb. As Luke says, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe in her womb leapt for joy. John the Baptist was a great prophet also inasmuch as he was the precursor of Jesus and had a chance to see the Messiah.

John the Baptist's parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a priest who descended from Aaron, the first high priest. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, also descended from the line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous and devout. John was a child of promise. When Zechariah was offering incense in the Sanctuary, an angel appeared to him and said that God had heard his prayers, and that his wife would bear a son whom he was to name John. John was sent by God to prepare the people for the Messiah. He is the last of the prophets of the Old Testament and the first to draw our attention to the Messiah. His preaching is the beginning of the Gospel of Christ, according to Mark. Still, John's was a passing voice. Christ's was the eternal word. The main mission of John was that of precursor—the one who went before to foretell the coming of another.

The evangelist John, in his Gospel 1:6 says, "He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light." John, who wrote the fourth gospel, was a disciple of John the Baptist. He began to follow Jesus when he heard John the Baptist say, "Behold the lamb of God," pointing to Jesus. John's preaching was in perfect harmony with his austere and mortified life. His words, accompanied by his exemplary life, made a great impression on the whole district, and he was soon surrounded by a large group of people who were ready to listen to him.

John gave testimony to the truth through his life and words. He showed no signs of being a coward in front of those in power. He was not afraid to admonish them, nor was he influenced by the praise of the crowd. As Isaiah says in the first reading, God made him a sharp-edged sword. He made him a polished arrow. Just as John proclaimed Christ, God wants us to make Him manifest through our words and lives wherever we are. There is no place that is restricted from our apostolate. God entrusts to us the same mission he entrusted to John—to prepare the way of the Lord, to be His heralds, to open up our minds and hearts, and help others to open their minds and hearts to God. As Christians we are the forerunners of Christ in today's world. Before His second coming, He wants us to be his voice in the world, preparing the minds and hearts of people to accept him. The Lord uses us as light shining in darkness. If we respond, many people will get to come to the light. Consistency between our teaching and our lives should be the best proof. Jesus will soon be present on the altar. Let us be a voice that cries out for Him, and a light that shines out for Him.