

Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
June 24, 2018

First Reading - Isaiah 49: 1-6

Hear me, O coastlands,
listen, O distant peoples.
The LORD called me from birth,
from my mother's womb he gave me my name.
He made of me a sharp-edged sword
and concealed me in the shadow of his arm.
He made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me.
You are my servant, he said to me,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.

Though I thought I had toiled in vain,
and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength,
yet my reward is with the LORD,
my recompense is with my God.
For now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
that Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Psalm 139

I praise you, for I am wonderfully made.

O LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and when I stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,
with all my ways you are familiar.

Truly you have formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works.

My soul also you knew full well;
nor was my frame unknown to you
When I was made in secret,
when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth.

Second Reading - Acts 13: 22-36

In those days, Paul said:
"God raised up David as king;
of him God testified,
*I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart;
he will carry out my every wish.*
From this man's descendants God, according to his promise,
has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus.
John heralded his coming by proclaiming
a baptism of repentance
to all the people of Israel;
and as John was completing his course, he would say,
'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he.
Behold, one is coming after me;
I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'

"My brothers, sons of the family of Abraham,
and those others among you who are God-fearing,
to us this word of salvation has been sent."

Gospel - Luke 1: 57-66, 80

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child
she gave birth to a son.
Her neighbors and relatives heard
that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her,
and they rejoiced with her.
When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child,
they were going to call him Zechariah after his father,
but his mother said in reply,
"No. He will be called John."
But they answered her,
"There is no one among your relatives who has this name."
So they made signs,
asking his father what he wished him to be called.
He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name,"
and all were amazed.
Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed,
and he spoke blessing God.
Then fear came upon all their neighbors,
and all these matters were discussed
throughout the hill country of Judea.
All who heard these things took them to heart, saying,
"What, then, will this child be?"
For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.
The child grew and became strong in spirit,
and he was in the desert until the day
of his manifestation to Israel.

Words from Our Holy Father

"A Christian does not announce himself; he announces another, prepares the way for another: the Lord . . . [John the Baptist's vocation was] "to prepare the people, to prepare the hearts of the people for the encounter with the Lord" [and] "to discern, from among so many good people, who the Lord was . . . the Spirit revealed this to him, and he had the courage of saying: 'This is the one. This is the Lamb of God, he who takes away the sins of the world . . . This is the one and more worthy than me!'"
- Pope Francis, Homily, Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, June 24, 2014

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You Are Mine

I will come to you in the silence
 I will lift you from all your fear
 You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice
 be still and know I am here

I am hope for all who are hopeless
 I am eyes for all who long to see
 in the shadows of the night, I will be your light
 come and rest in me

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow me, I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

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I Send You Out

I baptize you in the name of the Father
 I baptize you in the name of the Son
 I baptize you with the Holy Spirit
 Go out and spread Good News

I send you out on a mission of love
I send you out on a mission of love
I send you out on a mission of love
and know that I am with you always
until the end of the world

Well, it's time for us to become people with spirit
 It's time for us to become people of love
 It's time for us to know that Jesus Christ is risen
 forgives our sins and brings us new life

"Ground Rules" for Small Group Faith Sharing

- Maintain confidentiality – "Whatever happens in small group stays in small group."
- Judgment-free zone – You don't have to agree with everyone, but you have to have respect for everyone.
- No "shut downs" or "put downs" – See Christ in one another, BE Christ to one another.
- Don't be a "discussion hog" – Be sure that everyone that wants to gets a chance to share.
- Leave room for the Spirit – Silence is OK! Not everyone has to share.
- Practice active listening – Avoid interrupting, fidgeting, criticizing, lecturing, or thinking of what you're going to say while another person is speaking.
- Questions are a guide - You do not have to answer all of them or go in order.
- Be open – God is doing amazing things!

Questions for Reflection on the Gospel

1. What word, image, or phrase struck you from the Gospel?
2. In the Gospel, we hear that Zechariah doubted Gabriel's words that Elizabeth would bear a son. When have you discovered God at work in your life, despite your initial doubts?
3. When has some unexpected joy left you without words to express gratitude, or when has a moment of sadness or grief left you speechless? In hindsight, what would you have liked to say?
4. The First Reading is about the servant Israel who was chosen to be a beacon for all nations, and to see and be drawn back to God. Why do you think this reading was chosen for today's celebration of the nativity of John the Baptist.
5. Also in the First Reading, we hear, "For now the Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb." God called the servant in this reading before he was born. Do you think God knew you before you were born? Do you think God will be with you as you make all your life choices? How might you be part of the plan to help salvation reach the ends of the earth
6. In the Second Reading, we hear John preaching a baptism of repentance. Repentance draws people back into right relationship with God. How is John's baptism of repentance different from baptism in which Jesus sent the Holy Spirit?
7. What in the Second Reading tells you John was a humble man? Did John direct people's attention to himself or to Jesus? What was John's whole life and ministry about? What is your ministry about?
8. Read Pope Francis' words on the reverse of this page. How has the Holy Spirit revealed truths about Jesus to you? Where in your life do you see these truths unfolding?

Petitions

Our response: "The hand of the Lord is with us."

Closing Prayer

O God, you raise up prophets in every age. Let your Spirit, who filled John the Baptist from his mother's womb, fill us with joy as we celebrate his birth. May the example of his life, the urgency of his preaching, and the power of his prayers make us ready to receive the one he announced, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

