

We celebrate the birth of John the Baptist because of who John became in his later life. The significance of the adult John is pressed back into the story of his birth, a story appropriate to the measure of this great man. If the adult John the Baptist had played no significant part in the life of Jesus, the Gospel of Luke would not have celebrated his birth. We hallow the birth of John the Baptist because of the man he became for Jesus.

PRAYER

O God our loving Father, who has crowned the love of Zechariah and Elizabeth with the gift of their child, John, the one who would prepare a way for the Lord and call all people to a change of life: grant that as we rejoice in John's birth we may attend the challenge of his message and his humility before the person of Jesus. This we pray in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.



Fr Denis McBride's book Stations of the Infancy is available from Redemptorist Publications. Visit www.rpbooks.co.uk to order. CODE:1861 ISBN: 9780852315590



Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

FIRST READING Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11

PSALM Luke 1:46-50. 53-54

RESPONSE *My soul rejoices in my God.*

1. My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour. He looks on his servant in her nothingness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **R.**

2. The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name! His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him. **R.**

3. He fills the starving with good things, He sends the rich away empty. He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:6-8. 19-28

COMMUNION ANTIIPHON

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

Next Sunday's Readings:

2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38



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SUNDAY BULLETIN

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, GIOVANNI DI PAOLO, 1454

John the Baptist, who will be celebrated for cleansing people in the waters of the River Jordan, is now washed by a midwife with water from a bowl on the floor. The child looks at his father, Zechariah, who is seated while he writes on the scroll the message he received from the angel: "He shall be called John." In this warm domestic scene Elizabeth rests in her grand bed, pondering recent events, while a female relative dries a towel before the open fire.

Reading: Luke 1:57-66

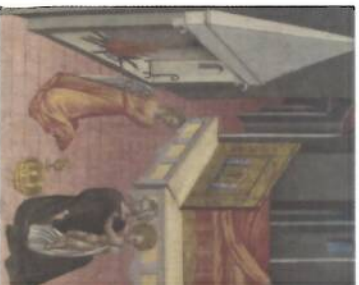
REFLECTION

In the reading the family rejoices at the birth of John the Baptist, the neighbours are thrilled that the two ancients have a child at last. Everyone hovers and whispers and wonders. A question is on everyone's lips: "What will this child turn out to be?" This is a question pondered by all parents when they look adoringly into the eyes of their newborn child: "Who will our child turn out to be?"

When John the Baptist emerges as an adult prophet, he is not a man who has invented himself out of thin air. He is the product of two particular parents, a particular home, a particular background and a particular love. Like us all, much of who he has become in life he owes to others.

Like all our childhoods, John's childhood is measured by the person he becomes in later life:

- In adulthood he emerges as a man of unique authority, an independent prophet who can dominate the wilderness and attract people to come out to the wilds to listen to his message.
- He can openly confront the religious hierarchy of his day and dismiss them in one line as a brood of poisonous snakes.
- He has the charismatic personality to attract the outsiders, the fringe people, like mercenary soldiers and prostitutes and tax collectors, and offer them something institutional religion can never offer them – real hope.



Stations
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In this series, on his book *Stations of the Infancy* Denis McBride looks at the beginnings of Jesus story an us to reflect o in our prayers

13 DECEMBER 20

3RD SUNDAY OF A YEAR B

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