

FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

June 24

Gospel: (Lk 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 the 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.

Reflection:

The birth of John the Baptist on June 24 comes three months after the celebration on March 25 of the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel told Our Lady that her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and six months before the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus. The purpose of these Feasts is not to celebrate the exact dates of these events, but simply to commemorate them in an interlinking way. Celebrating the birth of John the Baptist is a feast that is relevant to all of us today. When Mary the mother of Jesus journeyed to visit Elizabeth, the baby "leapt" in Elizabeth's womb at the greeting of Mary. Just like John, we would do well to "leap" with joy in announcing Jesus to all those we encounter in our world. We can do this in everything we do—not just by words, but by actions which proclaim our Lord to others.

Vincenzian Meditation:

If we are to rejoice in the grace of God—and the grace of God is given to us in order to "leap for joy"—we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart...to have a capacity for wonder. But there can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the poor, but our service must come from a heart that knows how to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. To dig continually a well of silence in our lives is to have assurance that God's grace will keep springing up, especially when we need it to help the needy who thirst for God's grace and kindness, and seek it from our hands and lips and hearts. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 55-56)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In your service to the poor, when have you marveled at the grace of God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, give us the grace to "leap for joy" like John the Baptist

as we announce you to all those we serve.

To all those who thirst for your grace and kindness,

may they find it in our hands, our lips and our hearts. Amen

