

During his imprisonment, John's faith was tested. He frequently asked himself if Jesus was the promised Messiah. As was the common belief of the Jewish people, John was looking towards a worldly messianic kingdom. He could not understand the reason why there was an ongoing delay.

Finally, John sent words by his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the one who was to come or were they to wait for another? [Mt. 11:2-3] Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them, And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." [Mt. 11:4-6]

The key words in this response were, "the blind receive their sight." These words were in fulfillment of the many prophecies of the Old Testament prophets which foretold that the blind would see. Throughout the entire history of the world, no one has ever surpassed Jesus in giving sight to the blind, either physically or spiritually. These words comforted John the Baptist, acknowledging that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Therefore, John had to continue to trust in the progressive Divine Plan of God that was slowly unraveling itself.

As we heard in this Gospel reading, the life of John the Baptist was cut short when he was beheaded. [Mt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:16-29] While Saint John did not live on earth to see the fullness of the glory of Jesus, in Heaven, he awaited for the moment of the Ascension, the time of the official arrival of Jesus as King of the eternal Kingdom. At that moment, John followed Jesus into the Kingdom of God as one of the first fruits of many more to come.

Saint John the Baptist is a Christian model after whom we should all aspire. He persevered in his blind faith, seeking nothing other than to serve and to obey God in humility. Equally, we are called many times during our lives to walk in blind faith, seeking nothing other than to serve and obey God in humility. Today, let us reflect upon the life of St. John the Baptist and ask the Lord Jesus to sanctify us so that we too may enjoy the persevering strength that John enjoyed until his last breath. \*(excerpted from: www.catholicdoors.com)

## ***The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist***

**Feast Day: August 29**



### **REFLECTION:**

**All the signal graces with which Saint John  
was favored sprang from his humility;  
in that virtue all his other virtues were founded.  
If we desire to form ourselves to solid virtue, we must, above all  
things, labor to lay the same deep foundation.**

## BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

\*John the Baptist was a righteous and holy man and it cost him his life. Truly humble in character, he felt unworthy to stoop down and untie the thong of the sandals of the Lord Jesus. [Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7] Once Jesus had appeared on the scene, the joy of John had been fulfilled. He humbly accepted that Jesus had to increase in popularity while his popularity had to decrease. [Jn. 3:29-30] As one would say, he had to make room for the Lord. Accordingly the people would turn their eyes towards Jesus and follow the promised messiah. No one is saved by turning their eyes towards another person. For there is only one Mediator between God and man, He being Jesus Christ.

Starting from the beginning, the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist was more spectacular than the average birth. While his father Zechariah was serving in the sanctuary as a priest before God, [Lk. 1:8-9] the angel Gabriel appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. [Lk. 1:11, 19] The angel told Zachariah, that although he and his wife were very advanced in age, they would have a son who would be named John.

The angel said John "will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." [Lk. 1:15-7]

Because of his old age and that of his wife Elizabeth, Zechariah doubted. As a punishment by God, he became mute, unable to speak, until the day when the birth of the child had arrived. [Lk. 1:20]

When the time arrived and Elizabeth had given birth, a name had to be chosen for the infant. As was the custom, the relatives and friends who had gathered expected that the baby would be called Zachariah after his father. Elizabeth stated that the child would be called John. Questioning this, those present asked Zachariah for his opinion on the matter. Zachariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John" as instructed by the angel Gabriel. [Lk. 1:57-63] "Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was freed, and he began to speak praising God." [Lk. 1:64]

Consequently "Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him." [Lk. 1:65-6]

During this time, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke a prophecy. [Lk. 1:67-79] In it, he proclaimed that the coming of the promised Messiah was being fulfilled. Regarding John the Baptist, he proclaimed, "And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare the ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins." [Lk. 1:76-7]

In the years that followed, "the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel." [Lk. 1:80]

When John began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, his message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." [Mt. 3:2] To this, he added, "Bear fruit worthy of repentance." [Mt. 3:8] In other words, it is insufficient to say that one had repented. Such a repentance must manifest loving words and actions of charity towards others.

Most likely, the main reason why John the Baptist is well known throughout the world today is because he was chosen by God to baptize Jesus on the shore of the Jordan River. When the Lord Jesus appeared before John to be baptized, at first, John humbly protested. He felt that he was the one who should be baptized by Jesus. In obedience to Jesus, Saint John the Baptist baptized the Lord. During this event, the heavens opened up and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Jesus. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." [Mt. 3:13-17] To this effect, John the Baptist testified, "And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." [Jn. 1:34]

John the Baptist was a prophet who spoke boldly. He did not tolerate hypocrisy from anyone, not even Herod the ruler. Publicly, John condemned the adulteress affair of Herod who was living with Herodias, his brother's wife, and the other evil things that Herod had done. [Lk. 3:18-29] Consequently, Herod had John thrown in prison. Some think as Herod, that because they have power, they cannot be touched by anyone. Woe to them when Judgment Day comes!