



June 19, 2022 – Pentecost 2 (C)
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

The church celebrates the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 25. John was Jesus’ cousin and a prophet with a large following when Jesus began his ministry. Although many of John’s followers believed him to be the Messiah, John recognized Jesus as the true Messiah, called for the world to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Mark 1:3), and baptized Jesus.

The Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist is one of the oldest Christian festivals, dating back to 506, and was first included in the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. It was decided to observe this feast six months before Christmas because Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy with John at the time of Jesus’ conception. This date in June also coincides with the summer solstice, a pre-Christian festival, which is now dedicated to the Nativity of St. John the Baptist in much of Europe and the Mediterranean and widely celebrated.

The Gospel of Luke describes John’s miraculous birth to an elderly, childless couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who was a cousin of the Virgin Mary. When the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a son who would be named John, Zechariah did not believe it was possible, so he was made mute. Zechariah’s speech was restored to him on the eighth day after John’s birth, when the baby was circumcised and named. With his newly regained voice, Zechariah then proclaimed the canticle known as the Benedictus Dominus Deus:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,



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as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace' (Luke 1:67-79).

Collect for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Almighty God, by whose providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Savior by preaching repentance: Make us so to follow his teaching and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and, following his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen (Book of Common Prayer, p. 241).



John the Baptist from Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece. The text, referring to Jesus, reads, "He must become greater, I must become less."

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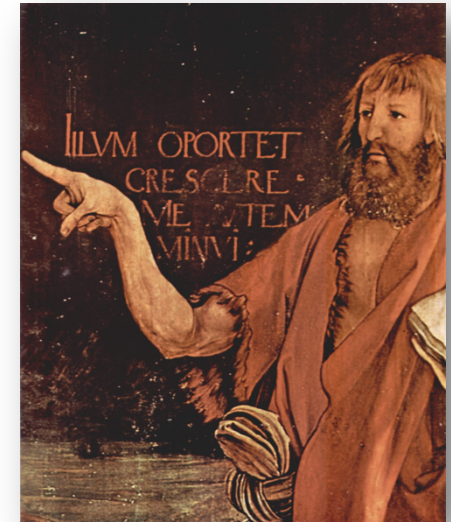
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