

★ LUKE 3:1-22, MATTHEW 14:1-12, (MARK 6:14-29), LUKE 9:7-9,

JOHN 1:15-36, 3:23-30

★ SEE ALSO ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOHN'S BIRTH (CARD 27),

VISITATION (CARD 29), BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (CARD 31),

BAPTISM OF JESUS (CARD 38), DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

(CARD 50)

★ CATECHISM 523-524, 535, 717-720



St. John the Baptist was the great fore-runner of Jesus and prepared the way for the promised Messiah. He also was a relative of Jesus. It could be that John was an Essene, a member of a religious community dedicated to living a pure life through penance.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah, John's father, was offering incense in the Temple when the angel Gabriel told him he would have a son.

Gabriel directed him to name his son John and foretold that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit and bring people back to God. Zechariah lacked faith in this message and, as a result, lost the power to speak.

The same Gospel tells of the visit Mary made to Elizabeth, John's mother, before John and Jesus were born. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, John leaped for joy within his mother, as though he had recognized the presence of the Savior within Mary. Eight days after John's birth, relatives and neighbors wanted to name the baby Zechariah after his father. However, Zechariah wrote on a tablet, "His name is John." With this action, Zechariah could speak again. He sang a canticle that included a prophecy about his son:

And you, child, shall be called prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways.

Luke 1:76

John spent his youth in the wilderness preparing for his mission. Then clad in animal skins, he called people to repent and baptized them in the Jordan River. One day Jesus came and was baptized by John. Later John sent his disciples to follow Jesus. John identified himself as "the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" He claimed he was not worthy to unfasten the sandals of Jesus, the task of a slave.

As a prophet, John spoke out against the sins of King Herod, who among other things had married his brother's wife Herodias. As a result Herod had John imprisoned. While John was in prison, Jesus praised him saying, "Among those born of women, there has been none greater than John the Baptist." The Roman historian Josephus wrote that Herod killed John because his popularity was a political threat.

The Gospel of Mark tells a dramatic and gruesome story about John's death. At a birthday party for Herod, Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced so well that Herod offered her anything up to half of his kingdom. Prompted by her mother, the girl asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Unwilling to take back his word before his many high-ranking guests, Herod granted her request and had John beheaded. John's disciples buried his body.

The Church celebrates two days in honor of St. John. His birth is a solemnity on June 24, and his martyrdom is commemorated on August 29.

† **ST. JOHN, PRAY THAT WE MAY RECEIVE JESUS**
IN THE WAYS HE COMES TO US! †

NAME the qualities of John that prompted Jesus to say of him, "Among those born of women, there has been none greater than John the Baptist." Who do you think are the ten greatest people who ever lived?

READ Luke 3:10-14 in which John answers the question, "What then should we do?" Think of ten different jobs and answer the question for each job.

CREATE a job description for John. John then passed the baton, so to speak, to Jesus. Create a job description for Jesus. Jesus then passes the baton to us. Create a job description for us.