

**Deep Humility**    The Nativity of St. John the Baptist    Saturday, June 24, 2017    8:15 AM  
Is 49:1-6;    Acts 13:22-26;    **Lk 1:57-66, 80**    (If we are called on to reflect the light as followers of Christ, then we have to do so in a humble way, so that people are not attracted to us, but attracted to the light that we reflect, which is of God.

Today we are celebrating the birth of John the Baptist, and although in the Middle Ages people started celebrating the birth of Mary—that is a very late feast—the birth of John the Baptist is the only ancient feast in the Church celebrating the birth of someone besides the Nativity of Christ himself. In fact in the time of Augustine, the **birth of John the Baptist** was placed precisely at this time of year because it's **the time of the summer solstice**; and the birth of Jesus was placed in December in the winter solstice. Augustine explained that when we commemorate the birth of Christ the days start getting longer, which celebrates him as the light of the world. John the Baptist was not the light and came to decrease when Christ appeared. Rightly then we commemorate his birth when the daylight starts to lessen.

So **John** came into the world to be a voice, but to be of no ultimate importance. He said, "I'm not worthy to untie the sandal strap of the one who is coming." **It's with this deep humility that he served God.** And his father served God with utter silence. If you think about it, Zechariah's importance is precisely the fact that for a long time he said nothing, and then said something: "His name is John."

So John the Baptist represents a liminal period, not really any more Old Testament; already the qualities of newness are opening up. He is not just one more prophet. In a certain way, Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament, although one can argue about Joel; but Joel and Malachi are really the end of something. But they pointing toward something new, something totally different. And John is the one who really comes to announce that. He is the voice crying in the wilderness. His birth is cause for great fear and rejoicing at the same time. So **John is the end of one thing, but the beginning of another.**

So as we gather on his birthday, not actually his birthday, but the day we celebrate his birth, we rejoice with all the saints who serve the light. And I believe **we are all called on to follow in John's humility.** If you think about, it is precisely humility that makes his message so attractive. And if we are called on to reflect the light as followers of Christ, then we have to do so in a humble way, so that people are not attracted to us, but attracted to the light that we reflect, which is of God.