

The Birth of John The Baptist - 25th June

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

On this 25th June, exactly 6 months before Christmas Day when we celebrate another, even more important birth, we commemorate the birth of John the Baptist - cousin to the Lord Jesus and son of the 'righteous priest' Zechariah and his wife, the barren Elizabeth.

Each morning in our daily 'office' we are encouraged to join with Zechariah in singing his song which we call the Benedictus - the first words from the mouth of he who had been struck dumb because of his doubts and questioning. It is a song, sung to his new-born baby son, who when grown would have such a great impact on us still today - he still goes 'before the Lord to prepare his way'.



Have you noticed (I'm sure that if you are a preacher, you will have) that you can't get to Jesus without first encountering John. He is there in Advent, pointing the way; he is there (albeit unnamed) as we hear of him leaping for joy in his mother's womb at our carol services; he is there in Epiphany, baptising Jesus to set His ministry in motion; he comes to the fore at other times, and asks from prison for his followers to obtain confirmation of Jesus' identity - of who he really is. And, as the preacher knows, he is there **every** year on these occasions and at times we struggle to find something new to say about him - or perhaps we try too hard as the message is the same each time.

So we acknowledge the birth of John today and are reminded that he grew into the wild looking prophet (an Old Testament prophet who we find in the New Testament) who came out of the wilderness to, as Zechariah foretold, point the



way to Jesus - whose sandals he claimed to be unworthy to untie. He was the preacher who called his congregation hypocrites, and a bunch of vipers, and in so doing increased the size of the crowds who came to see him - there is a thought, is that something to try after the easing of lockdown!

Perhaps today we should give thought to, and thanks for those who, pointed us towards Jesus. Perhaps a bible-bashing

minister who told us about this great Saviour who demanded that we repent, or perhaps with more subtlety we were given a bible or a certain book by a kind well-wisher, or maybe someone special and different walked along with us on our journey - someone who gave us knowledge of '*salvation by the forgiveness of our sins*'.

Perhaps too, the time is now right for the '*dawn from on high*' to break upon us and to shine on those in the darkness of shielding or isolation and even the shadow of death, someone who will guide their feet and ours into the way of peace' as our *life-Camino* takes us onward.

Let us pray the Collect for today:-

Almighty God, by whose providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Saviour by the preaching of repentance:

lead us to repent according to his preaching and, after his example, constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

A prayer of trust and promise

Lord, make us to walk in your way:

where there is love and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance;

where there is patience and humility there is neither anger nor annoyance;

where there is poverty and joy, there is neither greed nor avarice;

where there is peace and contemplation, there is neither care nor restlessness;

where there is the fear of God to guard the dwelling, there no enemy can enter;

where there is mercy and prudence, there is neither excess nor harshness;

this we know through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

At this time of continued uncertainty, we pray for so much, but in particular for our Camino Chaplains as they offer their thoughts and deliberations here over the weeks to come. We pray for Sybille and all those in Spain as the Covid 19 restrictions, there are eased, and for the church in Spain, and those whose livelihood depends on the Camino. We pray for those who are working to look after all those who cannot look after them selves and who feel that they are alone.

Please allow us to pray for - You, your family, your congregation, your exploration of new ways of ministry in difficult times - the things on your heart this day. May the Christ who defies the rules of social distancing walk closely with you, now and always.

Blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life and the blessing of Almighty God Father Son and Holy Spirit Be with you as you continue your Camino- and for all time

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P.S. Sorry, but I don't know the artists whose paintings I have used - if you do, please do let me know