

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



I recently met a young couple who were married last year. They were very much in love and were proudly holding their newborn baby, Tobias.

Today we celebrate the birth of another baby. None of us have met him, but his birth is rightly remembered.

Indeed, no other saint in the liturgical calendar (not including Jesus and Mary) has the event of their birthday celebrated.

He would grow up to have no equal, for there was no other greater born of woman.

His mother was well past her childbearing years, and his father lost the ability to speak, so surprised was he to think they had actually conceived. Were you ever lost for words, dumbstruck, gob smacked, did your jaw ever hit the deck? His dad experienced all of this, and it lasted the nine months of his wife's pregnancy, so incredulous was he at the thought that they would have a baby.

Then they had to choose a name. Not an easy thing to do. They could not Google babycenter.com to consult the most popular baby names (Liam, Noah, Oliver, Logan, Lucas, Elijah and James are among the top picks for 2018). Neither did they go the conventional route and call him after his dad, his granddad, or uncle. To the surprise of the whole family, the mom said he would be called John, which his dad confirmed when asked what he thought. We know him as John the Baptist, and the whole church, East and West, celebrates his birth today.

From his birth he was a Nazirite, which meant three things: he would drink no strong liquor, never cut his hair, and never touch a corpse (no future as a pall bearer).

Seems odd to us. But it's not so crazy.

Truth is all of us are called to be Nazirite. To abstain from strong liquor does not mean we are to become puritanical tea-totallers (no Jack Daniels, Cosmopolitans, Manhattans, or Margaritas for you!), but rather that we do not look for a life of ease, of comfort. Just as the drunk loses all inhibitions, knows no boundaries, and says and does stupid things, the one who looks for a life of ease, for the easy way out, never accepting the least problem, responsibility, difficulty or suffering, becomes a fool.

To never cut our hair. This too points to something else. It does not mean no more trips to the salon or the barbers, but that our strength comes from God. In the measure we trust in God, we lean on him, seek him, abandon ourselves to him, we are strong. Samson let Delilah deceive him into giving away the secret of his strength, she cut his hair and he became a weakling. Our strength comes from God, and can only come from him.

To never touch a corpse or come in contact with the dead. This does not mean that John had no future as a pall bearer or that he'd never get a job at Becker or Spearing Funeral Homes. To never touch the dead was a sign of being called to life. To experience life, not death. This life, victorious over death has been given to us also. As we celebrate the Nativity of John the Baptist, may each of us accept to be Nazirite as we enter the summer months.

Fr. Sean