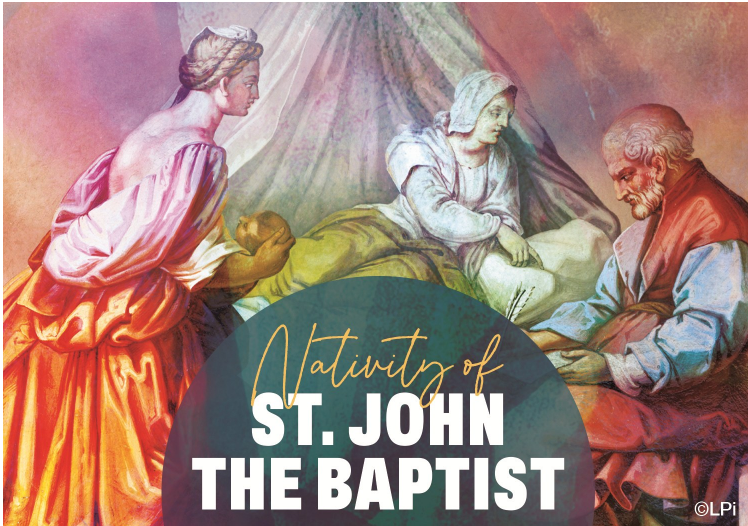


## FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On June 24, the Church celebrates the solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. This is no ordinary feast. It is a great sign for us, a living proclamation that God is faithful to His promises and that He prepares the way for our salvation even in the most impossible circumstances.

The story of John's birth is pure kerygma. Zechariah and Elizabeth are elderly and barren. Humanly speaking, their hope is dead. Yet the angel announces: "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." God breaks into

the silence of their lives and into the silence of Israel. The Lord always comes when we least expect Him, to do what we cannot do ourselves.

John is born to be the "voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." He is the last of the prophets and the first to point directly to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His whole life is marked by radical detachment: he lives in the desert, eats locusts and wild honey, and decreases so that Christ may increase. In him we see the true meaning of our Christian vocation: to be witnesses who point not to ourselves, but to the One who is coming and who has already come.

Have we walked this path of the Word? Have we experienced how God calls us out of our personal "barrenness," our sins, our fears, our routines, and to a new life? Like John, we are invited today to become voices in the wilderness of our families, our workplaces, and our parish. A wilderness often filled with noise, indifference, and despair. Who will cry out the truth if not us? Who will prepare the way for Jesus in the hearts of those who do not yet know Him?

The birth of John fills us with joy because it reminds us that the Church is always being born anew. Every time a brother or sister discovers the living Christ in the Word, in the Eucharist, and in the parish community, the Baptist's mission continues. This is why we celebrate his nativity with solemnity: because in celebrating John we celebrate the victory of God's mercy over every impossibility.

Let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of St. John the Baptist, for the grace of a new Pentecost in our parish. May many more families begin a journey of faith, may parents have the courage to form their children in the Gospel, and may each of us learn to decrease so that Christ may increase in us.

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." May this feast renew in us the joy of being messengers of the Good News. May the Virgin Mary, who carried the Word in her womb and visited Elizabeth, accompany us on this journey.

Pray for me! I am in Italy for what is hopefully a very fruitful gathering of priests.

Peace,