

Reading for the Solemnity of the Nativity of St John the Baptist

June 24th 2026

First reading

Isaiah 49:1-6

‘I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’

Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.
He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.
And he said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’
But I said, ‘I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.’
And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him —
for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength —
he says: ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 139(138):1-3. 13-14. 15. R24a

I thank you who wonderfully made me.
O Lord, you search me and you know me.
You yourself know my resting and my rising;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down;
you know all my ways through and through.
For it was you who formed my inmost being,
knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I thank you who wonderfully made me;
how wonderful are your works,
which my soul knows well!
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being fashioned in secret
and moulded in the depths of the earth.

Second reading

Acts 13:22-26

‘Before the coming of Christ, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance.’

In those days: Paul said, ‘God raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.” Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.”

‘Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.’

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. Luke 1:76

Alleluia, alleluia.

You, little child, will be called the Prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to make ready his ways.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 1:57-66, 80

‘His name is John.’

The time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, ‘No; he shall be called John.’ And they said to her, ‘None of your relatives is called by this name.’ And they made signs to his father, enquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, ‘His name is John.’ And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, ‘What then will this child be?’ For the hand of the Lord was with him.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Short reflection on the reading for today

John the Baptist is the only saint, after Jesus himself, whose birth is celebrated with a solemn feast. We have it on June 24th, six months before celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25th. Recalling Jesus’ birth at Christmas coincides more or less with the winter solstice. Just as the light of the sun begins to make a comeback after darkness has reached its peak, we celebrate the birth of the light of the world. The birthday of John the Baptist, in contrast, is recalled just after the summer solstice. This too is symbolic, for as the light of the sun begins to decrease after reaching its peak, we celebrate the birth of the one who said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

This question was asked by the neighbours and relations : “What will this child turn out to be?” could be asked of any of us. It is a question that could be asked about any of us at any stage of our lives, “What will we turn out to be?” or to put the question in terms of religious faith, “What does God want us to be?” “Is there a divine purpose for our lives?” The purpose of John’s life and God’s purposes for all of us have much in common. Our Maker wants all of us to do what John did, to point out the Saviour, to make way for Jesus, to lead others to him by what we say and do. John the Baptist, whose birth we now celebrate, has something to teach us about how to follow our God-given calling. He was a man of quiet, the desert, and a man of prayer. We all need to find our own desert place of prayer if we are to remain true to our calling to lead others to the Lord, if we are to turn out as God wants us to.