

Lives of Saints

St John the Baptist

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Feastday: 24th June



“No one can
receive
anything except
what is given
him from
heaven.”

(John 3:27)

My parents were Zachary, a priest of Abia, and Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. An angel announced my birth. It was announced that I would be great before the Lord, and that I would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

During the pregnancy, Mary visited my mother. I leaped for joy in my mother's womb. I was called 'John' since I would go before the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation to his people. My father, who had been dumb since the annunciation of my birth, recovered instantly.

During my adult life I went preaching in the desert, clothed in camel's hair, and a leather girdle. I ate locusts and wild honey. Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country about Jordan were drawn by my strong personality. The austerity of my life added immensely to the weight of my words. I laid bare the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. I spoke to the wealthy, the publicans, the soldiers. I encouraged faithfulness and honesty in the fulfillment of one's duties, and the humble confession of one's sins. I exhorted people to fast, and I taught special forms of prayer.

I was surnamed "the Baptist", since I baptized people, including Jesus, in the Jordan. I insisted that mine was only a forerunner's mission. I described myself as 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord'.

Whenever and wherever I met Herod Antipas, I rebuked him for his evil deeds, especially his public adultery. I was, consequently, apprehended and imprisoned. At the birthday feast which Herod gave, Salome, Herodias' daughter asked for my head. I was executed, and my head was brought in a dish and given to Salome, who gave it to her mother.

My Nativity is celebrated 24 June, whereas my death is celebrated 29 August.

S.D.C.
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