

Solemnity of John the Baptist

[Is 49:1-6](#)

[Ps 139:1b-3, 13-14ab, 14c-15](#)

[Acts 13:22-26](#)

[Lk 1:57-66, 80](#)

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As I was growing up in Puerto Rico, the celebration of John the Baptist took many different forms... but always brought us closer to water!! In an island that is difficult to avoid!! I remember going to celebrate the Eucharist right on the beach... that was the religious part! I also remember going to the river and even opening the fire hydrants on the streets... we just wanted to get wet as we remembered the Baptist...

As I look back to some of those customs I see them in a different light. I see them as a reminder of our Baptism and the joy that our Baptism brings into our lives as Christians. I also see them as a call to a deeper commitment, a commitment that John the Baptist also teaches us still today as we celebrate this solemnity.

Luke's gospel narrates the birth of the Baptist. From birth he brought joy to his parents but also puzzlement, questions and fears... "What, then, will this child be?" the neighbors asked... But we know who John was, we know he became a prophet; a fearless prophet who preached conversion and repentance in the midst of a difficult society. The celebration of his birth invites us to see and understand the reality of our prophetic vocation... a call to be prophets and to be people who not only preach but live conversion, repentance and reconciliation. This mission calls us to preach and live the power of transformation and the power and tenderness of God in our lives and in a society not too different from John's society.

All of us have been called and anointed from the very moment of our Baptism to be prophets who bring light into this world: the light of Christ; and we are also anointed to be prophets who bring a different flavor to a world that is hungry and thirsty for God. This call comes even before Baptism... In the reading from the prophet Isaiah we hear "The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name..." St. Augustine would also say "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." It is that restless heart that moved Isaiah and John. It is that restless heart that moves us to proclaim the greatness of the Lord. It is that restless heart that gives us the courage and the wisdom to be prophetic in a world that is everything... broken and whole, sinful and filled with the grace of God, a world where darkness and injustice are so present but a world where people of faith bring light and hope.

As I look back to the customs and traditions I followed as a kid, I remember the joy of celebrating with water... today I celebrate with that same joy and I recognize that we are all called to celebrate our Baptismal call to be messengers of hope and conversion. Today we gather as Church to celebrate and to remember that just as God called Isaiah, John the Baptist, the great prophets and Israel herself, God has called us through our birth in Baptism to proclaim with all of our lives the God who creates us anew.

As we gather and are strengthened with the Word and with the Eucharist, we recognize that a new name has been given to us: Christian. This is our identity, our call and our challenge: to be Christ in the world. May we help each other to live out this call!

(This is a good day to renew our baptismal promises and celebrate the sprinkling rite)