
24 Tuesday

BIRTHDAY of St JOHN the BAPTIST

Isaiah 49: 1 - 6
Ps 138: 1 – 3, 13 – 15
Acts 13: 22 - 26
Luke 1: 57 – 66, 80

Today's feast-day is a most unusual one --- it celebrates a birthday (Jesus Himself, and His Mother, are the only other actual 'birthdays' in the church calendar).. In old Europe, "St John's Night" marked mid-summer, with celebrations and legends going back to pre-Christian times. The person of John the Baptist, and his birth and naming are thus obviously something very special for Christians. So too is the name given him, first by the angel who appeared to Zechariah, then by his mother and confirmed by his father, to the astonishment of everyone there, as the gospel tells us. At his naming, people wondered what this child would turn out to be.

Today's scripture reminds us how God chose Israel to be His servant.. St Paul in his speech at Antioch recalled the history of God choosing His special messengers, and particularly David who would 'carry out my whole purpose', and how John would announce the coming of Jesus the Saviour. We remember how John pointed to Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world".

John the Baptist should be a special 'patron' and role model for all of us who, like him, have been chosen by God to "prepare the way of the Lord", to go before Him, to be witnesses of Jesus in our world.

Did perhaps our own parents and family wonder about us, "what this child would turn out to be" ? How would we answer them now ? More importantly, how do we live up to God's expectations of us whom He called into being, called by name ?