

The Birth of a Humble Man – Solemnity of the Birthday of John the Baptist on June 24th, 2020. (Isaiah 49:1-6, Acts 13:22-26, Luke 1:57-66,80)

Usually the church celebrates the day of a saint's death as his or her feast day because that day marks his or her entrance into heaven. But there are three exceptions to this rule as we have three notable figures whose birthdays are celebrated apart from their death dates. We celebrate our Saviour Jesus's birth at Christmas, we also celebrate the birthday the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8th, and today we celebrate the birthday of John the Baptist. This is because Mary and John the Baptist were cleansed right from their mother's womb to play a very vital role in our Salvation history.

So, we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist on June 24th, just after the summer solstice. After the summer solstice, the light of the sun begins to **decrease** after reaching its peak. Six months later we will be celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25th which also coincides with the winter solstice. During the winter solstice on December 25th, the light of the sun begins to **increase** after darkness has reached its peak. Jesus is the light that **increases** in darkness. That is why John the Baptist referring to these symbolisms once said, "He must **increase**, but I must **decrease**." (John 3:30) So, we celebrate the birth of a humble man. He was humble to acknowledge that he was not the Messiah and that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of the Messiah. Jesus must increase, while he John must decrease.

Jesus himself acknowledged John the Baptist as the greatest because he carried out his mission with humility. Today's gospel tells us that during the naming ceremony at John's birth, friends, neighbours and relations asked this question: "What will this child turn out to be?" This is a question that could also be asked

about us too: “What will we turn out to be?” or “What does God want us to be?” And the answer is that God wants us to be humble people like John the Baptist. I have never read anywhere in the gospel where John the Baptist was said to have performed a miracle. Yet he became the greatest by service in humility and pointing others to Christ and not to himself. May we serve God and mankind in humility of heart. **Amen. By Fr. Emmanuel Subaar.**