

THE BIRTHDAY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST WHY DID GOD CREATE ME?

There were some people in the scriptures whose birth and the reason for being born were foretold before, or made known to them after their birth. Examples are, Samson whose mother was barren, and the Angel of God appeared to her and told her she was going to give birth to a son who would rescue the Israelites from the power of the Philistines, (Jgs.13:2-5); and Jeremiah who was told by the Lord, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer.1:4).

John the Baptist's birth was also foretold by the Angel Gabriel; the same Angel who announced the conception of Christ. Today, we celebrate the feast day of his birth; (The Church celebrates the birthdays of three people; namely, Jesus, Mary, and John the Baptist. For the other saints, we celebrate the day they died). There were mysteries surrounding his conception and birth; his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were barren and both had passed the age of giving birth. His father was dumb before he was born because he doubted the message; John was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb, and he was given a name which was foreign to the family, and when he was born the father could talk again.

Who was he? John was a Nazirite like Samson; and the Angel said to his father Zechariah, "with the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before the Lord to reconcile fathers to their children, and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God" (Lk.1:11-17). He described himself to the Jews as "a voice of one that cries in the desert" (Jn.1:23), citing the prophecy of Isaiah. He considered himself not even fit to be the servant of the Lord Jesus, as we heard in the second reading. John is described as the VOICE of the WORD, the SERVANT of the MASTER, and the FRIEND of the BRIDEGROOM.

In short, he was the precursor of the Saviour who was to be born.

We can learn a lot from John the Baptist's life. He accepted who he was and why he was born. He was humble and never assumed the position which was not his, even though the Jews thought him fit for it. They thought he was the Messiah, but he said no, he was not, so when he saw Jesus passing he pointed to Him and told two of his disciples: "Look, there is the Lamb of God" (Jn.136).

He was filled with courage, and he was not afraid to tell the truth, which led to his execution, for telling Herod that it was wrong for him to marry his brother's wife, (Mt.14:3-12). He described the Pharisees and the Sadducees as a brood of vipers (Mt.3:7). He was a holy man who led an ascetic life, and he was faithful to his vocation.

Is it by chance or for nothing that I was born? Am I just to come and roam about on this earth and go back? No, God knew and knows why He brought me into this world. Isaiah said: "The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he gave me my name. You are my servant, through whom I show my glory," This is true of you and me.

My birth was not prophesied or foretold before I was born, but that does not mean that God had no plan for me when He brought me into this world. Before I was born He knew me. "He created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps.139:13); He called me by name because I am His child. So He has plans for me.

Once He made me His priest, then it means He wants me to do something for the salvation of souls. He called me to be a spiritual leader. This means my life is linked to the lives of many people who need to know God.

In the same way each one of you here was born without knowing the purpose for which he or she was born. All the same each felt called to do one thing or another for the service of others. You had or have the desire to marry; do you consider your marriage as a way of helping your partner to attain salvation? Do you think about your marriage only

in terms of social and economic success? What about the spiritual aspect?

Do you consider your career as God's way for you to make Jesus known and to touch souls? John told the people how to share their goods with others, and the tax-collectors and soldiers what to do to please God, (Lk. 3:10-14).

Those of you young ones should start thinking about what God is calling you to do for Him and others. God has plans for you: "Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and hope" (Jer.29:11).

Am I conscious of who I am? Do I reflect on why God created me? Am I humble, truthful, courageous, and honest in whatever I am doing? Do I think about serving God in my work? Am I accomplishing my mandate as who God created me to be? If not, the time is now. It's not too late.