

After the Heart of Jesus ...

*The LORD called me from birth,
from my mother's womb he gave me my name.
He made of me a sharp-edged sword
and concealed me in the shadow of his arm.
He made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me.
You are my servant, he said to me,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.
- Isaiah 49:1b-3*



These words of Isaiah (today's first reading) offer a self-reflection of his prophetic call. He knew that his destiny was determined at the earliest stages of his life, while he was in his mother's womb. Isaiah was to be a sharp-edged sword that could both protect and destroy, a person who could penetrate people's hearts to speak to the soul.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Birth of John the Baptist who was from this same prophetic tradition as Isaiah. This is one of the few feasts that takes precedence over the Sunday celebrations of Ordinary Time. It is roughly six months to Christmas! The days are at their longest and begin to get shorter and shorter as we celebrate the birth of the one who announced the way of the Lord. He would proclaim that "I must decrease and Christ must increase."

We generally associate John the Baptist with Advent and the preparation for Christmas. That connection is absent today. Yet John's role of preparing the way for Jesus is an important one to reflect on. John's message of repentance, of righteous living and just dealings with others, prepared people for the fulfillment of the law and prophets. In our day we have a responsibility to prepare the way for Jesus in the lives of others. It could be a simple invitation to a Home Mass or Sunday Eucharist. It could be sending a note of sympathy to someone who has lost a loved one. It could be in forgiving someone a grievous act that hurt deeply. Only you may know the acts that will really make a difference in the lives of those around you. As we recall the crucial responsibility John accepted for his life, may we be mindful of the responsibilities we have today to prepare the way of the Lord.



Home Masses will begin soon. I am grateful to those who are opening their homes for these important community gatherings. Each evening begins with the celebration of Mass, continues with social time, and concludes with an open forum discussion with your parish priests on our faith life at St. Walter Church. If interested in hosting or participating in a home Mass, please see the details in the bulletin and contact Jason Stone at the parish house.

The summer teen bible study continues to go well. Father Mario and I have enjoyed the chance to spend some time with our high school teens for discussions of faith as well as to have some fun afterwards. This past week we went out for ice cream after reflecting on John the Baptist and talking about what it means to talk with others about Christ today. The bulletin article lists the remaining dates.

In a couple of weeks we begin hosting Theology on Tap for our young adults in their 20's and 30's. We have an impressive group of presenters, including our own diocesan bishop, Bishop Peter Sartain. The gatherings are on Tuesday evenings in July (10, 17, 24, and 31). Please help us get the word out about this chance for young adults to meet together, gain new insights into faith, share their own faith experiences, relax and have fun.

May we accept our role in helping prepare the way of the Lord for others as we strive to live ...

After the Heart of Jesus!

Father John