



AMDG  
BIRTH OF  
ST JOHN THE BAPTIST  
YEAR B  
24TH JUNE 2018



**Testify to the light**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, who raised up Saint John the Baptist  
to make ready a nation fit for Christ the Lord,  
give your people, we pray, the grace of spiritual joys  
and direct the hearts of all the faithful  
into the way of salvation and peace.

John the Baptist is the only saint whose birthday is observed by the Church. Today, in the *Gospel*, we celebrate that birth and the joy it brought. We also remember John's identity and mission as he is named – just as God calls each one of us by name even before we are born, and invites us to respond to his call.

As a forerunner of the Lord, John was not given his father's name, but that given by the angel – even before his birth he was chosen to be a bearer of light to the nations (*First Reading*).

The *Psalms* affirms that I, too, am chosen to go out testifying to the light. I am moulded and fashioned for this purpose.

I can trust the Lord. It is his promise and his work in me (*Second Reading*). God will choose people after his own heart to bring the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Let us pray this coming week that we, too, might live according to the gift of salvation, asking the Lord for strength to be faithful to the name by which he has called us, as we try to spread light to others.

## PSALM 138 (139)

*R./ I thank you for the wonder of my being.*

**O** Lord, you search me and you know me,  
you know my resting and my rising,  
you discern my purpose from afar.  
You mark when I walk or lie down,  
all my ways lie open to you.

For it was you who created my being,  
knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I thank you for the wonder of my being,  
for the wonders of all your creation.

Already you knew my soul,  
my body held no secret from you  
when I was being fashioned in secret  
and moulded in the depths of the earth.

As always, I begin by trying to become still, noticing how I am feeling.

I read the text slowly, a few times, pausing over any words and phrases that touch me in some way. I ponder why this is so, as I entrust myself to the Holy Spirit and to the living Word.

Now I may like to read the text with John the Baptist in mind – he, too, was called and fashioned for a purpose. What do I notice about him as I read? What strikes me about the Lord who is doing the searching and the moulding?

Perhaps I now try reading with myself in mind. My very being is wondrous! Can I truly say 'yes' to this with a grateful heart?

I may like to picture the Lord creating me, giving his full loving attention to my every detail.

How do I feel?

Being created in this way opens me up – nothing can be hidden.

How does it make me feel to be fully known by the Lord ... apprehensive, protective, fearful ... or free, overjoyed, secure ...?

In all honesty, I talk to the Lord about this.

As I bring my prayer to a close, I ask for the grace to always trust in the Lord who knows me body, soul and spirit, and who continues to call, mould and fashion me.

*Glory be ...*

## GOSPEL: LUKE 1: 57–66, 80

**T**he time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy. Now on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. ‘No,’ she said ‘he is to be called John.’ They said to her, ‘But no one in your family has that name’, and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, ‘His name is John.’ And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. ‘What will this child turn out to be?’ they wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. The child grew up and his spirit matured. And he lived out in the wilderness until the day he appeared openly to Israel.

I place myself in the hands of the Lord as I read this Gospel prayerfully.

What strikes me as I read? What do I feel within?

I take my time and pause often.

In due course, I may like to pray with one or more of the lines from the text suggested below.

All those who heard about the birth of John *‘treasured it in their hearts’* – what do I treasure in my heart?

Memories ... hopes ... family ... some piece of good news?

*‘What will this child turn out to be?’* A relative or friend may have recently given birth, or I may like to think of children I know (perhaps my own).

I ponder their call to life and their growth to maturity.

For what can I be grateful? Can I share their joy?

*‘The hand of the Lord was with John’.* Do I have a sense of the hand of the Lord with me now, guiding me towards a more mature spiritual life?

I may feel drawn to ponder my own sense of purpose, remembering how the Lord called my name even before I was born (*today’s First Reading*).

As I come to a close, I speak to the Lord from the heart.

I may be moved to pray for those who are about to give birth; for those who have lost children, or have experienced great pain in pregnancy or in childbirth; or for those unable to have children for whatever reason.

*Our Father...*

## Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

I will make you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. *First Reading*

The Lord called me before I was born,  
from my mother's womb he pronounced my name. *First Reading*

I thank you for the wonder of my being. *Psalm*

This message of salvation is meant for you. *Second Reading*

All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. *Gospel*

*This week's texts if you want to reflect further:*

*Isaiah 49: 1-6; Psalm 138 (139); Acts 13: 22-26; Luke 1: 57-66, 80*



How does  
this image  
speak to me  
in my  
prayer?



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JESUIT  
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