

## **The Nativity of John the Baptist – Cycle B 6-24-12**

The key to inner peace is acceptance: acceptance of who you are as a person; your strengths and limitations; what interests you and what does not; the joys and sadness of life; the imperfections of all relationships; the fact that life is short and you won't "do it all;" some dreams happen others do not; suffering is a part of life. When we fight the realities of life that we cannot change, we are bound to be frustrated and filled with stress. We can't have it all, nor can we do everything we want and the sooner we realize and accept the life that has been given to us by God, the more our lives will be grounded in meaning.

Zechariah couldn't accept the fact that God was to make his relationship with his wife, Elizabeth, fruitful...that she was to give birth in her old age. God struck Zechariah mute, unable to speak, for his lack of trust and acceptance. And the name he gave this child was not his own, which was the custom, but the name "John," which means, "God is gracious." Elizabeth quietly accepted the reality of her "barrenness" and equally accepted her pregnancy in her "advanced years." She accepted the reality of her son's unique mission as he "leapt in her womb for joy" in the Visitation with Mary.

John was a saint of acceptance; he was not the one the people were looking for. He made it clear that his purpose was to "decrease" and the messiah must increase. John was destined to confront the power of Herod and pay the price with his very life; John accepted his fate. Jesus is the One who accepted his own mission and fate: "thy will be done" are the words of His acceptance. Jesus accepted the pain and suffering of the entire world and of each and every human being who lived, was living during his lifetime, and all who would come after.

Today we celebrate a birth of a man with a distinct mission, one that he fully accepted. We, too, are born with a distinct mission and, chances are, we live it quietly, with little fanfare or applause. After all, out of his thirty three years of life, thirty of those were spent completely out of the public eye and his three years of public ministry led to his Passion and rejection. Jesus accepted.

There is much that is wrong with our government, our families, our church, our economy and the list goes on. We can focus on all the negative, refusing to accept the fact that little will change in these areas...but each one of us can change what we are able to change in our small worlds. But we have to come to peace with the reality that even in our own small worlds, there are certain things we cannot change: The people around us, including those in our church, will always disappoint us in some way; that is the way life is. And to remember that each one of us is a disappointment to someone is the key to humility.

The feast of John the Baptist's birth is a celebration of acceptance and the following prayer says it all:

God grant me the *serenity* to accept the things I cannot change;  
The *courage* to change the things I can; and the *wisdom* to know the difference.