

Reflection Thursday week 12 Nativity of John the Baptist 2022

John the Baptist has two feasts, one in August, celebrating his death and one in June, celebrating his birth. A prophet from before his birth, leaping in the womb to announce the coming of the incarnate God, his task was to proclaim the fulfilment of all the prophecies. He did this with unequalled courage. Although the greatest of all men, he saw himself as the least in the kingdom of heaven. His disciples would have preferred him to fight, to build his sect, to defeat this upstart whom he baptized and seize his place in history. But he did not – and so, rightly, he *has* his place and glory in heaven. We can easily envy the great and the talented, and sometimes think that they are beyond envy but they are not. Sooner or later someone greater comes along and the encounter will allow them to show their true worth. John the Baptist did.

He certainly lived up to his name which is derived from the Hebrew Yohanan, meaning “**graced by God**.” It is a solid, traditional name that exudes strength, wisdom, and kindness. He was obviously a powerful presence as he drew people to him and formed a large group of disciples who could not permit themselves to leave and follow Jesus like Andrew and Peter. It is easy for us to see in him the return of the great prophet Elijah who we are told would appear to announce the coming of the Messiah. John fulfilled that role perfectly.

Really good leaders recognise that they have something special to offer a community, a group of people, a city, a nation. But they also recognise that after a certain time they need to step down and let others take things forward. John did just that. Even Jesus limited the amount of public time he spent with us.

Now it is our turn, your turn. What kind of leader will you be?