Reflection Monday Week 22 The Passion 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, John's task was to proclaim the fulfilment of all prophecies – and thus his own obsolescence. This he did with unequalled courage saying that he, the greatest of all men, was the least in the kingdom of heaven. His disciples would have preferred him to fight and build his own sect but he did not. Rightly, therefore, he has his place and glory in heaven.

Sunday's mass theme was humility. John the Baptist is the perfect example of this. He recognised his purpose as the herald of the Messiah, of Jesus. Once this had been achieved, he stepped back. Mission accomplished. May John help us recognise our mission(s), fulfil them and step back when they are accomplished.

John Shea writes about John the Baptist in prison aware of his impending fate. However, the Baptist thinks of himself as only half a man. Why? Because he believes he is only a half-prophet who can only do half a job. Thus thinks the Baptist:

I can denounce a king, but I cannot enthrone one.

I can strip an idol of its power, but I cannot reveal the true God.

I can wash the soul in sand, but I cannot dress it in white.

I can devour the word of the Lord like wild honey, but I cannot lace his sandal.

I can condemn sin, but I cannot bear it away.

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Shea presents the Baptist being aware of both his strength and his impotency. The Baptist can point out what's wrong and what should be done but sees himself helpless without the strength needed to correct the wrong. Yet the Baptist did everything God asked of him.

- My dad told me to finish his bird painting. He painted the head, torso and legs. To be honest, I just winged it.
- If your canoe turns upside down in the water, you can wear it on your head. Because it's cap-sized.