

**John the Baptist Malcolm Guite:**

Midsummer night, and bonfires on the hill  
burn for the man who makes way for the Light:  
'He must increase and I diminish still,  
until his sun illuminates my night.'  
So, John the Baptist pioneers our path,  
unfolds the essence of the life of prayer,  
unlatches the last doorway into faith,  
and makes one inner space an everywhere.  
Least of the new and greatest of the old,  
Orpheus on the threshold with his lyre,  
he sets himself aside, and cries "Behold  
the One who stands amongst you comes with fire!"  
So, keep his fires burning through this night,  
beacons and gateways for the child of light.

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Love's hidden thread has drawn us to the font,  
a wide womb floating on the breath of God,  
feathered with seraph wings, lit with the swift  
lightening of praise, with thunder over-spread,  
and under-girded with an unheard song,  
calling through water, fire, darkness, pain,  
calling us to the life for which we long,  
yearning to bring us to our birth again.  
Again, the breath of God is on the waters  
in whose reflecting face our candles shine,  
again, he draws from death the sons and daughters  
for whom he bid the elements combine.  
As living stones around a font today,  
rejoice with those who roll the stone away.

*"O great and admirable mystery! He must increase, but I must decrease, said John, said the voice which personified all the voices that had gone before announcing the Father's Word Incarnate in His Christ.... But He is said to grow in us, when we grow in Him. To him, then, who draws near to Christ, to him who makes progress in the contemplation of wisdom, words are of little use; of necessity they tend to fail altogether. Thus, the ministry of the voice falls short in proportion as the soul progresses towards the Word; it is thus that Christ must increase and John decrease."* St Augustine (354-420)