

JUNE 24 2025, FATHER VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

The Nativity of John the Baptist

There was a renowned Grade 3 schoolteacher who always bowed reverently before the children in his class before beginning the day's lesson. When someone asked the reason for it, he said, "We never know what one of these children will turn out to be in the future, so my bow is a way of reverencing the divinity within each child and the potential that each child has."

Sisters and brothers, a child is a bundle of great possibilities. Whether these possibilities are realized or not depends, to a great extent, on one's parents and mentors. It is said that every child comes into this world with a message that God still loves the world.

Now, John the Baptist, whose nativity we celebrate today, came into this world with so much potential. As we heard in today's Gospel, after the miraculous birth and naming of John, the people pondered and said, "What then will this child become?"

Only three people's birthdays are celebrated liturgically: the birth of Jesus, the birth of Mary, the Mother of God, and John the Baptist. It is understandable that we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the birth of Mary—but why John the Baptist?

It is because of the special role that John the Baptist had in the history of salvation. Just as Jesus and Mary were both set aside for a special purpose before they were born, John the Baptist was also set aside for a special purpose before he was born.

In our first reading, the prophet Isaiah says, "The Lord called me before I was born. When I was in my mother's womb, he named me." These words are very appropriate for John the Baptist—but they are also

appropriate for you and for me. God knew us and called us before we were born, too.

This is something to think about in our modern times, where abortion has become such a widespread phenomenon. Every human life is valuable and precious in God's eyes.

God called John the Baptist to be a prophet. God called him to be a bridge between the Old and the New Testaments. God called him to prepare people to welcome God's love, manifested in and through the person of Jesus Christ. And John was very faithful to the role entrusted to him—so much so that Jesus himself said of John, "I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John."

Sisters and brothers, God has called you and me through our baptism. God has called us to be prophets of God. God has called us to be the bridge between God and God's people in our time. God has called us to prepare the hearts of people in our families and in our society today, so that they can receive and experience the fullness of God's love through us.

And so, as we come together to rejoice and to celebrate on this great solemnity of John the Baptist's nativity, we pray for the courage to be prophets. We pray for the grace to be the bridges between God and people. And we pray to be faithful to the mission that has been entrusted to each of us through our baptism.

May God bless us, and may God bless our faith journey. Amen.