

Liturgical Living: Nativity of St John the Baptist

On June 24, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist (otherwise known as his birthday). Only three birthdays are celebrated on the Church's liturgical calendar: Jesus, Mary, and Saint John the Baptist.

John plays a unique role in the history of salvation. Only Luke's gospel tells us of the marvelous circumstances surrounding his birth. But each of the four gospels tells us of his essential work in preparing the way for Jesus.

The Scriptures tell us that St. John the Baptist was born through the miraculous gift of God to Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were too old to bear children. The Angel Gabriel visited Zechariah to tell him that they would have a son and that they should name him John. Because Zachariah was skeptical, he was rendered mute until the time his son was born. The child was then named John, in fulfillment of God's will.

Scripture also tells us that when Our Lady went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant with St. John, the infant leapt in her womb.

Saint John the Baptist was set apart from the womb to prepare the way of the Lord and was a significant figure connected to the Incarnation and the Redemption. The Church honors him because of his role in preparing the way for Christ.

It is a tradition in many parts of the world to host a bonfire party and to have a priest bless the fire. It is also an appropriate time to burn old sacramentals that are no longer of use (like broken scapulars), since burning is one of the approved ways to dispose of blessed items.

Here are a few ideas for celebrating this solemnity at home:

- Make [stuffed shells](#) for dinner in honor of the shell used to pour water in baptism
- Play a leaping game, like hopscotch or leapfrog, in remembrance of Saint John leaping in Elizabeth's womb
- Bake a [honey cake](#) (Saint John the Baptist ate locusts and honey in the wilderness)

Saint John the Baptist, pray for us!