

The Fame of John the Baptist (Nativity of John the Baptist, June 24th)

Acts 13:22-26—John the Baptist, “I Am Not He”

1. Pauls’ Speech: to the people of Antioch of Pisidia (cf. Acts 13:13-16)
2. Baptism of John: one of “repentance” (Greek *metanoia*) (13:24)
3. John’s Testimony: “I am not he” (13:25)
4. Message of Salvation: John is part of the “message of salvation” (13:26)

Josephus: Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and *that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins, but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.* Now, when others came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late. *Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod’s suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death.* Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God’s displeasure against his. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.116-119; trans. W. Whiston)

Living Tradition

Catechism: *John the Baptist is “more than a prophet.” In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah. He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the “voice” of the Consoler who is coming. As the Spirit of truth will also do, John “came to bear witness to the light.” In John’s sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels. (CCC 719)*

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Nativity of John the Baptist, Nov 24th)

1. Do you have a devotion to St. John the Baptist? What role might he play in the spiritual life of a Christian?
