

From My Rectory Window...



This is one of those rare occasions when the commemoration of a Saint takes place on a Sunday. As normally Sunday, with its Resurrection theme and methodical covering of the Sacred Scriptures, always takes precedence. However, this weekend the 23rd/24th of June we remember the great “forerunner of the Lord”, St. John the Baptist. This always comes as a great surprise to many of the devout that next to Our Blessed Mother comes St. John the Baptist in the “sanctoral order” which the Church keeps in celebrating those “holy ones” who had a special closeness to the life of Christ. It suffices to simply quote Our Lord’s own estimation on the fittingness of honoring St. John the Baptist: “Among those born of woman he is the greatest” Matthew 11:11. How’s that for a sterling endorsement? This weekend on the night before the actual feast (the Vigil) we read much of the miraculous events surrounding the announcement of St. John’s birth to his poor beleaguered Priest-father Zechariah who while attending to the Liturgy received this message from the Archangel Gabriel and remained unable to speak just for having a doubt that Whiting aged people could conceive and bear a son much less that he would be an instrument of the Most High. (It would be the talk of the clubhouse!) On Sunday we read about the actual birth of St. John from the Gospel of St. Luke. In this way we truly marvel and give honor to the fact that the “Cousin of the Lord”, this unexpected son of the older Jewish Priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth (the cousin of Our Lady), came to announce the *news* before the **Good News**. Because of his participation in the familial lineage, St. John the Baptist was also a Jewish Priest. Evidently, he was not called to function in the great Temple in Jerusalem, but rather as he grew he felt called to a life of prayer and asceticism, living in the desert eating little (tradition says he lived on locusts and wild honey, wearing camel hair clothing with wild hair). (That would put me into a continual bad mood to say the least!) But it was to this man who incurred the wrath of the local king, Herod Antipas, for not so tactfully pointing out his irregular marriage situation, that we first hear the words (so familiar to us especially in the Advent season): “Prepare the way of the Lord”. It fell to St. John the Baptist who practiced a typical Jewish ceremonial washing ceremony on the banks of the Jordan, that he should point to his cousin Jesus and declare the words which are so well known to us: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world”. Yes, St. John was the true “spotlight” who would make clear who the Lord Jesus was and how his own work was finished and that he should decrease. May our craggy and not so conventional “fore-runner” of the Redemption, pray and intercede for us as we commemorate his birthday this weekend. Congratulations to our neighbor Father James O’Neill who will be formally installed as Pastor of St. John’s in Lakehurst. Father is a frequent visitor to our rectory at supper time so that he can get a good meal and join in Priestly fraternity at our table. We are also involved in collaborating already in our youth group, our St. Vincent de Paul Society, and other foreseeable projects. Congratulations Father Jim. Thank you to everyone who continues to support our endeavor to repay our reserves after the just about completed renovation to our heating and cooling. We are more than halfway to recovering two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Also, we are over 85 percent towards our Catholic Annual Appeal for the Diocese. Thanks to all who participate in these worthy endeavors. God willing, I will be going on retreat this coming week (I could sure use it). Remember to pray for me. I’ll see you at the **Great Yard Sale** this coming weekend. Best regards and farewell to Father Mark as he reports for his new assignment in Lawrenceville and a warm welcome to Father Evarist who arrives next weekend. Folks as usual I know you will make Father Evarist welcome and comfortable. The summer is here, can you believe it. Wondering where all the time has gone along with you:

Your Pastor and servant: Fr. Pat Papalia