

My Dear Parishioners,

Praised be Jesus Christ! This week, Church Calendars and Chronological calendars fit together in a remarkable way. You may recall that when the Angel Gabriel declared God's Message to Mary, He provided a sign. "Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren" (Lk. 1, 36).

We'll this week, 6 months prior to the birth of Jesus, we celebrate the birthday of John! I share a reflection below on the significance of this event and invite you to our "Summer Christmas" on Monday as we celebrate John the Baptist with an ancient Baptist Bonfire.

Peace,

Fr. Rogers

Mid-Summer Feasting: The Solemnity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist By Jennifer Gregory Miller

Merry Christmas! I know it's not December, but June 24, [Solemnity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist](#), is often referred to as "Summer Christmas" because it is exactly six months from Christmas. The cult of St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of Christ is very ancient, which makes this such a multi-faceted feast both in the liturgy and traditions connected to the feast. To touch on a few highlights:

A Birthday Celebration

The only other births that are celebrated in the Church's Liturgical Calendar are the birth of Jesus on Christmas, and the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8th. Jesus is the Son of God, so He is always without sin. Mary was immaculately conceived, having no original sin and staying sinless throughout her life. Church tradition states that while in St. Elizabeth's womb, upon hearing Mary's voice, John the Baptist's soul was cleansed of original sin as he leapt for joy. The Church celebrates St. John's [birth](#) and [death](#), but usually saints' feast days are celebrating the day of their death, marking their birthday into heaven—the first day of their eternal reward.


Light and Water

This feast brings to the forefront imagery of light and water. The opening of the Gospel of John describes the Baptist's role: "He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light" (John 1:7-8). Later John the Baptist explains that he is the friend of the bridegroom, rejoicing at the sound of bridegroom's voice, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

As noted before, the Precursor's birth marks the halfway point before Christmas. In the Northern Hemisphere, this feast marks midsummer, close to the historical Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year. After the solstice, the days grow shorter (the light decreases) until we reach the winter solstice, close to Christmas, where we have the shortest day of the year, and Christ comes upon the world. After Christ's birth, the light increases. Granted, Midsummer Eve festivities were held long before Christ was born, but the Church wisely baptized this festival, nourished it and now calls it Her own.

Light (as in sun and fire) and water are the two imageries that keep repeating for this feast (and saint). All over Europe bonfires were traditional for St. John's Eve. "The Church blesses such fires, praying God that the faithful may overcome the darkness of the world and reach the "indefectible light" of God." (Dir. Pop. Piety, [#225](#))

And as St. John THE BAPTIST baptized with water, including Our Lord, water plays a significant role. In reading about different customs throughout the world my favorite has to be Mexico, where they bathe and swim and throw water "baptizing" each other. 236



ADORATION OF OUR LORD
"Here I Am, Lord." Isa 6:8
EVERY MONDAY IN CHURCH
8:00 AM - 7:00 PM
ALL ARE WELCOME

St. Alphonsus Liguori said "Know also that you will probably gain more by praying fifteen minutes before the Blessed Sacrament than by all the other spiritual exercises of the day. True, Our Lord hears our prayers anywhere, for He has made the promise, 'Ask, and you shall receive,' but

He has revealed to His servants that those who visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament will obtain a more abundant measure of grace." No matter what storms or challenges you are facing, the Lord will strengthen you during Adoration. Each time you visit Him, you will receive the healing you need to face the storms and challenges in your life.

Our parish offers Eucharistic Adoration on Mondays from 8AM-7PM. All are invited to stop in the church to spend some time with the Lord. We also celebrate First Fridays with Adoration from 7PM-8PM. For questions or information, contact Angela Eyre at 484-753-4801 or email – reachmorepatrick@gmail.com