

## Solemnity of John the Baptist (B)

My wife and I have had a dog in our house for 25 years. We bought a dog mainly because of the kids. Before we purchased a dog, we wanted to make sure we had a breed of dog that had the right temperament, gentle, good with kids, not aggressive; we did our research. We finally settled on a golden retriever and we were not disappointed. My wife did home daycare and the dog was right in the middle of all of it. Many times, I felt that I had to protect the dog from the kids. He would be laying by the front door minding his own business and the kids (of all ages) would go to him, lay on him, many times pulling his upper lip up to the point that I thought the dog was getting hurt. Not once did the dog growl, get aggressive with a child, not once. All he ever did was lick them or play with them. He was bred to have this disposition. I remember taking the dog to puppy kindergarten for training and the trainer telling the class that the only mission of a dog was to please us. When our first golden retriever died we repeated the process one more time with a second one and he too was just as good as the first. Both Sam and Jack did everything to please all of us. It was all they wanted to do, it was as if it was their only mission in life.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the birth of John the Baptist. The Church will only celebrate three birthdays through the Liturgical Calendar, three only; Jesus's birthday, Mary's and John the Baptist. That's how important he is.

ST. JOHN the BAPTIST was called by God to be the forerunner of his Divine Son, and to prepare mankind to receive the Messiah. This was John's only mission in life. Luke writes:

<sup>16</sup> And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,  
<sup>17</sup> and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah,  
to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,  
and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,  
to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

John will make people ready for the Messiah, through a message of repentance. Repentance (meaning conversion) a deeper conversion/change in one's life.

Conversion. We should ask ourselves, do I need conversion, have I gotten off course in my relationship with God. What about those around us, the world we live in? Are we only responsible for ourselves, or our neighbor too? When I look at our country and the world today I ask myself, where is John, John the Baptist. In a world where more and more people are leaving the Church, not only the Catholic Church but many others; what or who are they seeking? What is the message that is not getting out there? Where is John the Baptist? In Ireland, where abortion was just legalized in a landslide vote and a high government official has now called for Catholic hospitals to perform abortions saying it would be discriminatory not to do them I have to pause. When has this become rhetoric in the world, that it is discrimination to refuse to perform an abortion. Where are you John? In our own country, where we had been stripping children away from their immigrant parents and putting them in abandoned Walmart

stores, or holding facilities, young children, toddlers and older, I have to scream, what is happening? (this policy thankfully has just been changed). Pope Francis will say that how we treat immigrants can be placed on the same footing as to how we treat the unborn. John, where is your message? Is his message of conversion, repentance, preparation to receive the Lord not being heard? Has it lost its significance? Is it false?

We, as the body of Christ can't turn our hearts away from what is going on. It was said that St. John Paul II was once asked why he wouldn't visit a particular country. His response in so many words was that not until the Cardinal there stepped out of his comfort zone and began challenge to government with the truth, the hard truth would he visit. God said in the Book of Isaiah, "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." My brothers and sisters, we are that light. We are sons and daughters of God. Whatever way God calls us to be that light we must always be open to it and have the courage to be like John the Baptist and cry out, to family, friends, co-workers, neighbors: make straight the way of the Lord. Only then can we change a country, can we change a world.