

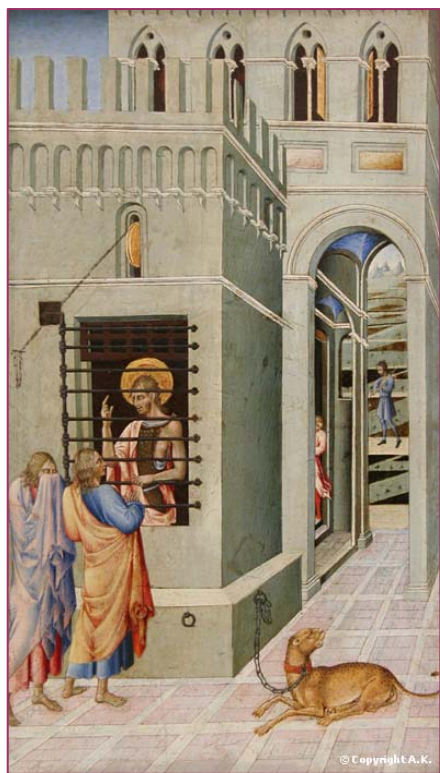
John the Baptist

As we celebrate the feast Holy Epiphany, the character of John the Baptist presents itself to us with a glaring clarity. This invites us to reflect on some aspects of his personality and his ministry.

1. **Although John the Baptist served only for a short period, his ministry was very effective because it was very genuine and serious.** Additionally, his ministry was inspired by God rather than humans. He was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was a fetus in his mother's womb (**Luke 1:41**) and he persevered to be guided by the Spirit in all the steps he took and the words he spoke (**Luke 1:80**).

2. **The Lord Jesus was the center of his service,** and he used to point to him so that others could follow him (**John 1:36**). He spoke of Jesus as the "stronger one" who will come after him, although He existed before him, and who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (**Luke 3:16**). He assured those around him that he was to decrease while He (referring to Jesus) increases (**John 3:30**). **The secret of his greatness was that God was the center of his life.**

3. Of all those of his generation, he knew Jesus best and he knew Him at a very profound level. He knew that He is the Son of God (**John 1:34**), that He is descending from above and coming from heaven (**John 3:31**) that He was the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world (**John 1:29**), that He is the **bridegroom of the Church** (**John 3:29**), and that He is the judge who will bring judgment upon the world and sort out the righteous and the evil doers (**Mathew 3:12**). These secrets were not revealed even to the Apostles until a long time after John's and they were revealed gradually.



4. **He identified with all groups throughout his ministry** (e.g. tax collectors, soldiers, Pharisees, Sadducees, and the general public) (**Mathew 3:7, Luke 3:7-14**). He spoke with each group of people with the language appropriate to them, and guided and directed them with a spirit of love and with an interest in their well-being.

5. **He was so charismatic that drew large throngs to him from far and wide and from all walks of life** to listen to his teaching and repent at his hands, confessing their sins, revealing their weaknesses, washing themselves off with his baptism (**Mark 1:5**). Even Herod was drawn to him and listened to him with great joy, acknowledging his sainthood and righteousness (**Mark 6:20**).

6. **He was characterized with tenacity and his strong witness to the truth.** He did not flatter others at the expense of the truth. And we all know the story of his conflict with Herod as a result of his witnessing to the truth (**Matthew 14**).

∴ **Challenges made him stronger and he served even when he was in prison.** He sought to divert the attention of his remaining disciples, and incited them, to follow Christ (**Mathew 11:2**). Jesus witnessed to that there was no greater prophet than him among those born of women (**Mathew 11:11**).

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