June 24: Birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:57-66,80)

**SOMEONE WE DO NOT KNOW**

Today, we celebrate St John the Baptist's birth, but it is not so much to honour a man of the past. We celebrate him because of our need for many John the Baptists today. Each of us is meant to be a John the Baptist in his or her own place and time.

We are called to be the self‑controlled person, willing to become less, so that the Saviour can become more alive among us. And we are asked to be loyal to our God‑given task in life, despite our doubts and limitations. The Baptist himself had gnawing doubts about his mission to announce the Saviour's coming. He was in prison under remand when he sent a messenger to Jesus to ask him: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for someone else?”

We have the same mission, to point out the one who is to come, and to recognise the same one, Jesus, who is already among us, someone we do not know perhaps as well as we should.

We are all caught up in the modern conditions of family life and secular living, and we may well question where God fits into it all, and what impact the Saviour has made on people’s lives. You may say that you don't see much evidence of him, the signs are not impressive. However, the signs in some people are very impressive.

But Jesus himself assures us that he is already there, in anyone who needs us. We don't have to go romantic about the poor, the hungry, and the exploited. We should look for him first in our immediate surroundings ‑ husband, wife, children, parents, community members, fellow workers, business associates.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is already among us as someone we do not know, in all who need us and call us away from our selfishness and our resentments, hurt feelings and unforgiving nature, to reach out to them, accept them as gifts from God, and respect the dignity that Jesus gives to them.

The people whom we live with are usually the hardest people to accept. It is very difficult for our self‑centred nature to accept Jesus in the people closest to us, or to accept these people as we would Jesus. But peace and joy are not to be found anywhere else. Neither is Jesus to be found if we can’t find him there.

God makes his joyful presence felt throughout our life, if only we are ready to look for him in our secular tasks no less than in Church, in all our moods including frustration, and in the most difficult people whom we would rather not live with.

The birth of St John the Baptist brought joy to all who were waiting for their deliverance. Each of us can bring joy to everyone we meet, when we see in them Jesus, the one who is to come.