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Friday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time (C) — Green

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Living a *Fruitful* *Life*

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We first hear about John the Baptist when he leaps for joy in his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's voice. We then see him as an adult, dressed in camel's hair and a leather belt, eating locusts and wild honey. His simple lifestyle reflects his dependence on nature's bounty, on divine providence.

The Gospel according to Mark presents John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the messenger sent ahead to prepare the way, the ice crying out in the desert: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John baptizes with water, calling on men and women to mend their ways and go back to God. One day, he baptizes his cousin, Jesus, at the River Jordan.

When Jesus starts his public ministry, John sends two of his disciples to ask, "Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?" (Lk 7-19; Mt 11:3) By then John has already been arrested on orders of Herod. Jesus tells his cousin's disciples: "Go back

and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor." (Mt 11:4-6) Knowing and fully accepting his role in God's plan of salvation. John encourages his disciples to follow Jesus. In today's Gospel, we hear about John's fate: he is beheaded on Herod's birthday, as a result of Herodias's scheming.

John's experience tells us that following Jesus will not spare us from pain or the difficulties of life. On the contrary, we will be called to make sacrifices and endure painful experiences. But let us look beyond the prison bars, at blind people who can now see, at those who were lame and now can walk, at those with dreaded skin diseases who are now made clean, at deaf people who can now hear, and at the dead who now came back to life.

In the world's eyes, John's end was tragic. But those who have faith say that John's martyrdom emboldened and even prepared Jesus to face his own death on the cross. Imagine how a human being like John becomes a positive influence on the Messiah! Both of them remained faithful to Yahweh to the very end because they know that there is life beyond prison bars and Calvary, and that greater things are hidden beneath the surface of the good things breaking forth across the land.

In the face of persecution. John and Jesus remained steadfast. This is because they know that everything happens according to God's plan. Faced with our own problems, let us draw comfort and hope in the thought that we are all pilgrims following the route taken by John and Jesus. Let us follow their example by living a fruitful life, taking life's challenge, and facing these boldly rather than escaping it. Courage and faith come from God.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps 106 [105]: 47)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Save us, O Lord our God! And gather us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and make it our glory to praise you.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—When Jesus came into the world, He knew that he was to suffer and die for us all. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for another. The martyrdom of John the Baptist in today's Gospel is a perfect realization of its full meaning. Let us pray that we may continue to love God and one another without reservation.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

(Pause)

P—Have mercy on us, O Lord.

All—For we have sinned against you.

P—Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

All—And grant us your salvation.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All—Amen.

P—Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Grant us, Lord our God, that we may honor you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (Sir 47:2–11) *(Sit)*

The Lord had given strength to David to slay the giant. The women sang his praises. He destroyed the Philistines and ordered celebrations. The Lord also forgave him his sins.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

LIKE the choice fat of the sacred offerings, so was David in Israel. He made sport of lions as though they were kids, and of bears, like lambs of the flock. As a youth he slew the giant and wiped out the people's disgrace when his hand let fly the slingstone that crushed the pride of Goliath. Since he called upon the Most High God, who gave strength to his right arm to defeat the skilled warrior and raise up the might of his people, therefore the women sang his praises, and ascribed to him tens of thousands and praised him when they blessed the Lord. When he assumed the royal crown, he battled and subdued the enemy on every side. He destroyed the hostile Philistines and shattered their power till our own day. With his every deed he offered thanks to God Most High, in words of praise. With his whole being he loved his Maker and daily had his praises sung; He set singers before the altar and by their voices he made sweet melodies. He added beauty to the feasts and solemnized the seasons of each year so that when the Holy Name was praised, before daybreak the sanctuary would resound. The LORD forgave him his sins and exalted his strength forever; He conferred on him the rights of royalty and established his throne in Israel.

—The word of the Lord.

All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 18)

R—Blessed be God my salvation!

1. God's way is unerring, the promise of the LORD is fire-tried; he is a shield to all who take refuge in him. **(R)**

2. The LORD live! And blessed be

my Rock! extolled be God my savior. Therefore will I proclaim you, O LORD, among the nations, and I will sing praise to your name. **(R)**

3. You who gave great victories to your king and showed kindness to your anointed, to David and his posterity forever. **(R)**

Alleluia (Lk 8:15) *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart, and yield a harvest through perseverance. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mk 6:14–29)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All—Glory to you, O Lord.

KING HEROD heard about Jesus, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." Others were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets." But when Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up." Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. Herodias had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. His own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." He even swore many things to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall

I ask for?" Her mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

—The Gospel of the Lord.

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Prayer of the Faithful

P—John the Baptist gave testimony to Christ by his preaching, up to the shedding of his blood. We pray, O Father, for people who are persecuted on account of their faithfulness to their mission.

R—Lord, hear our prayer.

C—May the Church be endowed by the Holy Spirit with apostles and prophets who denounce evil and sin in all their forms. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we be inspired to act by the example of those who devote themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel and serving others, often at the cost of their lives or of their comfort. We pray: **(R)**

C—May rulers and political leaders not run after people who trouble their conscience by speaking the truth and asking for justice. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we fight against concupiscence, the temptation of the flesh, and the snare of the devil through prayer, meditation on the Word of God, and through the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we be grains of wheat and instruments for the salvation of humanity, following the example of John the Baptist and of other martyrs. We pray: **(R)**

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: **(R)**

P—Almighty Father, you chose the weak to confound the mighty and the proud. Be our refuge and strength in time of trouble. Give us the courage to stand by our faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts

(Stand)

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—O Lord, we bring to your altar these offerings of our service: be pleased to receive them, we pray, and transform them into the Sacrament of our redemption.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

Common Preface IV

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

P—Lift up your hearts.

All—We lift them up to the Lord.

P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation through Christ our Lord.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels, we praise you, and with joy we proclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy...(Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All—We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion

(Kneel)

P—Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(Ps 31 [30]: 17-18)

Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.

Prayer after Communion

(Stand)

P—Let us pray. (*Pause*)

Nourished by these redeeming gifts, we pray, O Lord, that through this help to eternal salvation true faith may ever increase.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Prayer over the people

P—Bow down for the blessing. (*Pause*)

Be gracious to your people, O Lord, and do not withhold consolation on earth from those you call to strive for heaven.

Through Christ our Lord

All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—The Mass is ended. Go in peace.

All—Thanks be to God.



PRAYER TO THE **SACRED HEART** *of Jesus*

Divine Jesus, you have said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," behold me kneeling at your feet, filled with a lively faith and confidence in the promises dictated by your Sacred Heart and pronounced by Your adorable lips. I come to ask this favor: *(Here silently mention your petitions).*

To whom can I turn to if not to you whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits? Where should I seek if not in the treasure which contains all the riches of your kindness and mercy? Where should I knock if not at the door through which God gives himself to us and through which we go to God? I have recourse to You, Heart of Jesus. In you I find consolation when afflicted,

protection when persecuted, strength when burdened with trials, and light in doubt and darkness.

Dear Jesus, I firmly believe that you can grant me the grace I implore, even though it should require a miracle. You have only to will it, and my prayer will be granted. I admit that I am most unworthy of your favors, but this is not a reason for me to be discouraged. You are the God of Mercy and you will not refuse a contrite heart. Cast upon me a look of mercy, I beg of you, and your kind Heart will find in my miseries and weaknesses a reason for granting my prayers.

O Sacred Heart, whatever may be your decision with regard to my request, I will never stop adoring, loving, praising and serving you. My Lord Jesus, be pleased to accept this my act of perfect resignation to the decrees of your adorable Heart which I sincerely desire may be fulfilled by me and all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity to those who are suffering or in distress. Look upon me, I beg of you, dear Jesus, and grant me the grace for which I humbly implore you through the Immaculate Heart of your most sorrowful Mother. You have entrusted me to her as her child, and her prayers are all-powerful with you. Amen.

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