

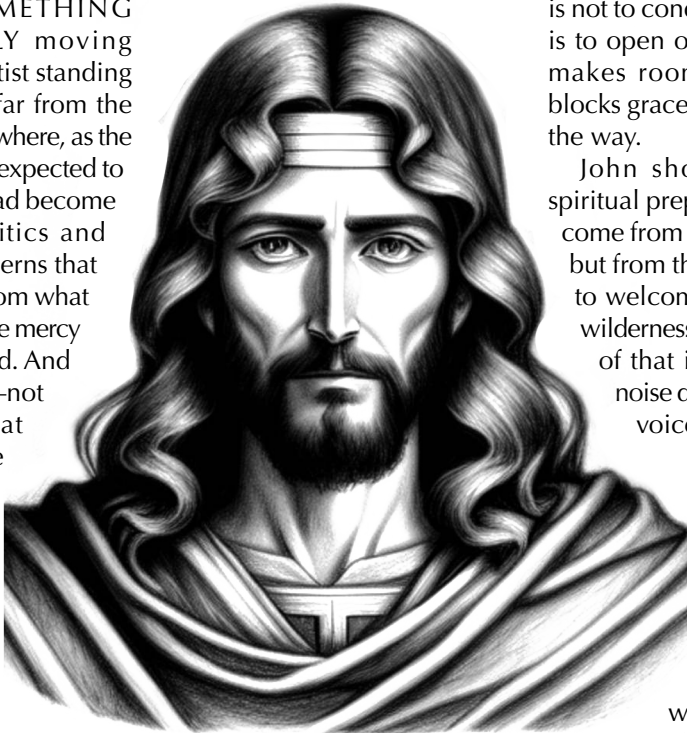


"LESS OF ME, MORE OF HIM"

THERE IS SOMETHING PROFOUNDLY moving about John the Baptist standing in the wilderness, far from the temple of Jerusalem where, as the son of a priest, he is expected to serve. The temple had become clouded with politics and cluttered with concerns that distracted people from what they truly long for: the mercy and presence of God. And so it is the desert—not the sanctuary—that becomes the place of encounter. People go out to him because John is offering what the temple had forgotten to give: forgiveness, renewal, and a clear invitation to begin again.

Even more striking than John's location is his posture. He does not promote himself. He does not claim authority. He does not grasp for recognition. Instead, when pressed about his identity, he simply says: "I am a voice." Not a title, not a position, not a hero—just a voice preparing the way.

In an age where everyone wants to be seen, noticed, validated, or affirmed, John's humility is almost shocking. He understands that his life makes sense only in relation to the One who is coming. His greatness is in pointing away from himself. *"There is one among you whom you do not recognize."* John's mission is



is not to condemn ourselves—it is to open ourselves. Humility makes room for God. Pride blocks grace; humility prepares the way.

John shows us that true spiritual preparedness does not come from titles or credentials but from the heart's readiness to welcome God's plan. The wilderness becomes a symbol of that inner space where noise dies down and God's voice becomes clear.

As we begin a new year, our Gospel today asks us difficult but important questions:

- What wilderness must we enter so God can speak again?
- What clutter must be cleared to "make straight the way of the Lord"?
- Where is God calling us to be a voice rather than the center of attention?

John's peace did not come from being important but from being faithful. His joy came from decreasing so that Christ could increase.

Today, let us ask for the grace to see Jesus as John saw Him. Ask for the humility to recognize that everything we have—and everything we are—is a gift. And finally, let your life become a pointer, a signpost, a voice crying out gently but firmly: *"Behold, the Lamb of God, who enters even the wilderness of our hearts to save us."*

John Carlo Perez

to help people recognize Him.

This humility is what prepares John to utter the greatest proclamation: "Behold the Lamb of God." Every first-century Jew knew what that meant. The Lamb was the sacrifice that would reconcile God and his people. John is not only pointing to a teacher or prophet—he is pointing to the One who would offer the definitive sacrifice, the One who would become the true and perfect Temple.

We cannot receive the fullness of Christ's grace unless we stand in the truth of our humility. To acknowledge our unworthiness

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Cf. Sir 44: 15, 14)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Let the peoples recount the wisdom of the Saints, and let the Church proclaim their praise. Their names will live on and on.

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—In the Gospel, John the Baptist does not compare himself to Elijah or to the Prophet prophesied by Moses. Instead, he sees himself as the voice crying out in the desert to prepare the way of the Lord who is Jesus, the Messiah. May we be witnesses to the Gospel like John the Baptist and the saints we celebrate today: Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen.

Penitential Act

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

P—You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

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

All—Amen.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who were pleased to give light to your Church by the example and teaching of the Bishops Saints Basil and Gregory, grant, we pray, that in humility we may learn your

truth and practice it faithfully in charity.

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



Reading (1 Jn 2:22-28) *(Sit)*

God the Father proclaims Jesus, his Son, as the Savior and Messiah. Whoever denies Jesus denies the Father as well. Let us hold us to this teaching we heard from the beginning.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

BELOVED: Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, this is the antichrist. Anyone who denies the Son does not have the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well. Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made us: eternal life. I write you these things about those who would deceive you. As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, so that you do not need anyone to teach you. But his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and not false; just as it taught you, remain in him.

And now, children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame by him at his coming.

—The word of the Lord.

All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 98)

R—All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

1. Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm. **(R)**

2. The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel. **(R)**

3. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands; break into song; sing praise. **(R)**

Alleluia *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. In times, past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets: in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Jn 1:19-28)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

All—Glory to you, O Lord.

THIS IS THE TESTIMONY of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

—The Gospel of the Lord.

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily *(Sit)*

Prayer of the Faithful

P—John the Baptist confesses that he is not the Messiah, but one who prepares a straight

path for the Lord. Let us pray that the Lord may find welcome in our hearts and in our lives.

R—Lord, make us witnesses of your salvation.

C—That the ministers of the Church may see themselves as servants of the Lord and lead the people not to their own persons but to the Lord alone. We pray: **(R)**

C—That civil authorities may prove true to their promise to serve their constituents, and not to lord over them, enriching themselves at the expense of common good. We pray: **(R)**

C—That we may not allow ourselves to be deceived by promises of material reward, black political propaganda, and fake news. We pray: **(R)**

C—That the Lord may grant us the serenity to accept things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference. We pray: **(R)**

C—That the Lord may close the door of hate and open the door of love, and let kindness and good desire come with every greeting. We pray: **(R)**

P—O Lord, may our testimony to your love be less in word and more in action. May our good works redound to the glory of our Father who is in heaven, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. .

All—Amen.

**LITURGY OF
THE EUCHARIST**



Presentation of the Gifts

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
(Stand)**

P—Accept this sacrifice from your people, we pray, O Lord, and make what is offered for your glory, in honor of Saints Basil and Gregory, a means to

our eternal salvation.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

Preface (Holy Pastors)

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, through Christ our Lord.

For, as on the festival of Saints Basil and Gregory you bid your Church rejoice, so, too, you strengthen her by the example of their holy lives, teach her by their words of preaching, and keep her safe in answer to their prayers.

And so, with the company of Angels and Saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (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...

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

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
(Cf. 1 Cor 1: 23-24)**

We proclaim Christ crucified; Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

**Prayer after Communion
(Stand)**

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

May partaking at the heavenly table, almighty God, confirm and increase strength from on high in all who celebrate the feast day of Saints Basil and Gregory, that we may preserve in integrity the gift of faith and walk in the path of salvation you trace for us.

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)*

May God, the glory and joy of the Saints, who has caused you to be strengthened by means of their outstanding prayers, bless you with unending blessings.

All—Amen.

P—Freed through their intercession from present ills and formed by the example of their holy way of life, may you be ever devoted to serving God and your neighbor.

All—Amen.

P—So that, together with all, you may possess the joys of the homeland, where Holy Church rejoices that her children are admitted in perpetual peace to the company of the citizens of heaven.

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—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 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 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 by all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity for 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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