



THE MESSIAH PREFIGURED

BEN SIRA, in writing the book of Sirach, depicts David in glowing proportion. The author points out the trajectory of David's meteoric rise to power — from being a poor shepherd boy, to a local legend, to a charismatic leader, until finally becoming the greatest king of Israel. He has endeared himself to the entire realm because he does not only provide political stability or material progress to the nation; he also leads his people to glorify God by his music and songs. Many psalms were put together in his own time and under his leadership. At break of dawn, the temple in Jerusalem and the entire city reverberate with the soulful chanting of psalms. Ben Sira, while acknowledging the human foibles of David, chooses to gloss them over, saying that God has forgiven David from his sins and that his kingdom is in fact established on an everlasting throne.

Generations upon generations of Hebrews had awaited the coming of the Messiah from the house or lineage of David, a kingdom seen to be without end. When Jesus Christ had gone preaching publicly for the first time, he looked nondescript and nothing in his looks suggested that he was the Messiah who was destined to reign in an everlasting throne. King Herod had mistaken him for John the Baptist, the prophet whose very life Herod had sacrificed on the altar of hubris and pride.

King David and John the Baptist may have lived centuries



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apart but both biblical characters prefigure Jesus Christ who is the Messiah. David, the poor shepherd, rises to become the greatest king of Israel. Jesus, son of a carpenter, is revealed to be the Son of God. The distinction between the two is that while David had committed sins and abominations against God, Jesus remained faithful to his heavenly Father's will until the end.

John the Baptist had lived a simple and somewhat eccentric life, preferring to eat locusts and wild honey, and to benefit only from the fruits of nature like camel's hair and a leather belt. Jesus on his part also lived simply, and even taught his disciples to depend always on divine providence. John the Baptist had preached a message of repentance and conversion; after the murder of John the Baptist, Jesus took over the reins of the Baptist's preaching ministry and adopted the same message of repentance and conversion.

Today's Gospel, recounting the cold-blooded murder of John the Baptist, is a most vivid prefiguration of Jesus' death. King Herod is threatened by Jesus' popularity among the masses. His name has become like a sheath of gold illumining the horizon and casting off the darkness that has weighed upon the people for so long. The death of the Baptist rankles in Herod's mind, disturbing his conscience. He is threatened by annihilation and his kingdom is on the verge of collapse. He wrongly imagines Jesus to be John the Baptist, resurrected from the dead.

In a way, we can argue how the life of a good, decent and holy man like John the Baptist was unceremoniously cut off due to flimsy and very selfish reasons. The pride of King Herod, the machinations of Herodias, the ignorance of Salome — all these had vanquished John's ministry. Many times we also ask to be illumined why the lives of many decent and honorable people had to be snuffed out in the prime of their lives. It is the very same question foisted on the death of Jesus as we all continue to seek meaning for the death of many of our loved ones who had departed in the summer of their youth.

Somehow, in the deepest part of this mystery called death, we draw consolation and strength in the thought that God is still present in our groping and questions, while trusting that the blueprint that God holds in his hands is meant to be the best for everyone.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Holy men shed their glorious blood for the Lord; they loved Christ in their life, they imitated him in their death, and therefore were crowned in triumph.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

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

P—In today's Gospel, Mark narrates the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Like Elijah and the other prophets, John was zealous for the will of the Lord for Israel, and so confronted Herod about his unlawful union with Herodias. He, the precursor of the Lord, was thus found worthy of a martyr's death, his last act of witness to Christ.

Penitential Act

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

P—Lord Jesus, in your holy martyrs you show us the glory of the cross: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—Lord Jesus, you found John the Baptist worthy of martyrdom: Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—Lord Jesus, you reward the martyrs with the prize of everlasting life: 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, strength of all the Saints, who through the Cross were pleased to call the Martyrs, Saints Pedro Bautista, Paul Miki and companions to life, grant we pray, that by

their intercession we may hold with courage even until death to the faith we profess.

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 (Sir 47:2-11) *(Sit)*

In his praise of Israel's great ancestors, the wise man Sirach presents the deeds of King David, who established the kingdom of Israel and added beauty to the worship of God in the temple.

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 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 (See 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.

Herodias's 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—Let us pray to our heavenly Father who sent his Son to suffer and die for us. May we in turn witness to the saving power of the cross. Full of confidence, we pray:

R—Lord, listen to your people.

C—May God continue to bless the Church with shepherds who live their prophetic ministry like John the Baptist and who will witness to the truth and inspire many to hold firm to Christian values. We pray: **(R)**

C—May the example of the John the Baptist, Saints Pedro Bautista, Paul Miki and companions sustain and guide us to follow in their witnessing and to live the Gospel even in the midst of hostility and persecution. We pray: **(R)**

C—May the Sacred Heart of Jesus strengthen the weak, comfort the sorrowing, and pardon sinners. We pray: **(R)**

C—May our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus make our homes places of welcome for those who come in need. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we thank the Lord for the blessings we have received by sharing our time, talents, and love, especially with our suffering brothers and sisters. We pray: **(R)**

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

P—Lord, hear the prayers of your people. May we who honor the holy Martyrs receive the courage and strength to remain steadfast in our faith.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept...

Prayer over the Offerings (Stand)

P—Receive, holy Father, the offerings we bring in commemoration of the holy Martyrs, and grant we, your servants, may be found steadfast in confessing your name.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

Preface II (Holy Martyrs)

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 you are glorified when your Saints are praised; their very sufferings are but wonders of your might: in your mercy you give ardor to their faith, to their endurance you grant firm resolve, and in their struggle, the victory is yours, through Christ our Lord.

Therefore, all creatures of heaven and earth sing a new song in adoration, and we, with

all the host of Angels, cry out, and without end, we acclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy... (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All—We proclaim your Death...

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...

P—Deliver us...

All—For the kingdom...

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...

Communion Antiphon

See how rich is the Saints' reward from God; they died for Christ and will live for ever.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)

P—Let us pray. (*Pause*)

O God, who in your holy Martyrs have wonderfully made known the mystery of the Cross, graciously grant that, drawing strength from this sacrifice, we may cling faithfully to Christ and labor in the Church for the salvation of all.

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 the weakness of your devoted people stir your compassion, O Lord, we pray, and let their faithful pleading win your mercy, that what they do not presume upon by their merits they may receive by your generous pardon.

All—Amen.

P—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 and bear witness to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

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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