

Saint John the Baptist

Feast Day: June 24



los angeles missionary childhood association

All Grades

Some athletes who have won Olympic gold medals began their training as early as the age of two. They spent their childhoods preparing to achieve their goal of being the best in their sport. John the Baptist seems to have had an even earlier start in preparing for his goal.

According to Luke's Gospel, Zechariah, John's father, was the first to be prepared for John's birth. While he was offering incense in the Temple, the angel Gabriel came with the announcement. The angel said that the baby's name would be John, that he would be his father's joy and delight, that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit, and that he would bring people back to God. Because of his momentary lack of faith, Zechariah lost the power to speak and hear until John was born.

The same Gospel also tells of the visit between Mary and Elizabeth, John's mother, before both John and Jesus were born. Elizabeth revealed that at the sound of Mary's greeting, John leaped for joy. Tradition holds that at this moment John was freed from original sin.

Luke also tells of the joyful reaction of relatives and neighbors at John's birth. Eight days later these same people wanted to name the baby Zechariah. However, his father

indicated in writing that he wanted his son to be named John. With this action, Zechariah recovered his ability to speak, and the people were amazed. They began to ask the question, "What then will this child become?" (Luke 1:66).

Some years after this event of the naming, Luke's Gospels records that John spent his youth in the wilderness, preparing for his mission. What was his mission? His father gave a prophecy on the day that John was named: *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways* (Luke 1:76).

