

SUNDAY PLUS

Beloved of God

Happy in second place

by Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

John the Baptist is the independent prophet who stands between the hidden life of Jesus and his public ministry. Jesus does not begin alone: none of us does. Jesus is a northerner from the hills of Galilee and one day he makes the long journey south, which would have taken around four days. Like many other people, he is attracted by the person and preaching of John the Baptist; like many of his contemporaries, he submits to John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. After his association with John, Jesus' life takes a dramatic turn.

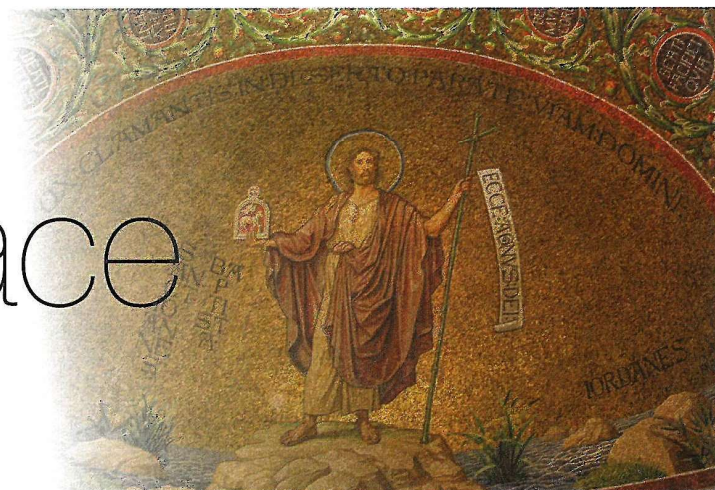
John the Baptist has a clear sense of himself that he does not occupy the number one slot.

Although John has his own group of disciples, he does not make himself the focus of his prophetic witness; he does not claim that he is the way, the truth and the life. "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am..." John understands his own powerful place within the larger context of God's plan and this frees him to defer to the greater one. Jesus' greatness does not diminish John's importance: John is important precisely because of who Jesus is.

John's way is a challenge to all of us: to foster the

greatness in others without feeling threatened about the value of our own contribution; to be free to celebrate the importance of others because we have a sense of our own worth and value. As John Ruskin said: "Really great people have a curious feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them. And they see something divine in every person."

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.



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Child of my love

by Katie Knight

There was no performance when a well-known actor saw his new daughter for the first time: tears of joy poured unashamedly down his cheeks.

One of my greatest joys as a midwife was letting a couple see their new baby for the first time. For a few minutes, the world became Mummy, Daddy and Baby. "That was when we became a family", smiled one new mother. "Little Alex changed us for ever."

So imagine what it was like for God to see Jesus standing in the river Jordan. There were no cameras but the Father had his own way of letting the world know about Jesus. "This is my beloved Son", he declared without showing off a bundle of photographs. "Listen to him" – and God wasn't referring

to Jesus' first words or party piece song.

We perhaps overlook the fact that the Father had his own "Wow!" moments. Remember what it was like when you saw your child for the first time and you will know how God felt!

Katie Knight is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Father God, you identified Jesus as your "beloved Son". Be with all parents who work to provide a happy, secure home for their children. Comfort those children who have never known a parent's love. ☪ Amen.

Beloved and not forgotten

by Max Mathews

It's easy to work on our relationship with God without ever considering God's relationship with us – and after all, relationships are a two-way street.

When God said: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased", he chose an important theme for his first-ever message from heaven to earth.

Jesus was and is the Son of God and, through Jesus, God calls us also to be his children even if – especially if – we don't return that willingness to bring him closely and intimately to us.

It is hugely liberating for, and comforting to, all God's people to know that God loves us – despite all our flaws and imperfections

– divinely, infinitely and unconditionally, more than we can even love ourselves. The love between a parent and child is the closest comparison that we have in our human experience.

We can all draw on that liberating and comforting knowledge which can shield us in darker times and can provide the unshakeable bedrock to our faith.

Max Mathews is a young Catholic student of journalism.

"Upon each one of us too, born anew through the water and through the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Father makes his voice resonate with infinite love, saying 'You are my beloved son'."

Pope Francis

Today:
Isaiah 55:1-11
1 John 5:1-9
Mark 1:7-11

Monday:
Hebrews 1:1-6
Mark 1:14-20

Tuesday:
Hebrews 2:5-12
Mark 1:21-28

Wednesday:
Hebrews 2:14-18
Mark 1:29-39

Thursday:
Hebrews 3:7-14
Mark 1:40-45

Friday:
Hebrews 4:1-5, 11
Mark 2:1-12

Saturday:
Hebrews 4:12-16
Mark 2:13-17

Next Sunday:
1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19
1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20
John 1:35-42