

The humble and great Forerunner
By Bishop Milan Lach

I would like to say a few words about St. John the Baptist, a humble person and great saint, who lived his life close to Jesus Christ.

Many people thought he was the Messiah, but he told them, “I am not the Messiah... I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’” (Jn 1:20,23). As Scripture says, John “was not the light, but came to testify to the light” (Jn 1:8). For this reason, our tradition gives him the title of “Forerunner” to underscore his preparatory role.

John was a witness to the light, wisdom and purity that emanates from Jesus Christ. His testimony extended to the point of laying down his own life for Truth. The question is: how do we want to be friends of the Bridegroom Christ? Do we want to be witnesses and forerunners of the God who became flesh for our sake? This is our mission as Christians: to be those who prepare the way for God, for Jesus Christ. We must first prepare the way for him to come into our heart, and then in the hearts of our friends, siblings, parents and colleagues. I assure you, brothers and sisters, Jesus wants you to be a forerunner and to prepare the way.

It’s difficult sometimes to accept this position — of being in the background — in our Christian life. We live in a society where everyone wants to be first, where everyone wants to be a winner, where everyone wants to be Superman, and nobody wants to be last. Nobody wants to be second. But Jesus taught that he who is last shall be first, and the first shall be last (Mt 20:16).

Jesus also wants us to be his friends. What does it mean to have a good rapport with him? To have a good relationship with him means to spend time with him, to speak with him, to exchange with him our sorrows, our troubles, but also our joys and our happiness, to share everything with him. Once we have this relationship with Christ, then we will be happy. We will have peace in our hearts, and we will lose the need to have friends, to follow celebrities, because the biggest celebration in our life will be Jesus Christ, who is sufficient. It is nice to have good people in your life, but from the moment you accept Jesus in my heart, no one will be more celebrated for you than Jesus, for the best friend of your life will be Jesus Christ. So, brothers and sisters, I wish for you to be friends with Jesus, just as John the Baptist and Forerunner was a friend of Jesus, so much so that he laid down his life for the Truth and for him.

+Bishop Milan

This column is from a homily Bishop Lach preached June 21, during Vespers at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Parma, Ohio.

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