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Birth of John the Baptist

Date: Tuesday, June 24, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Isaiah 49:1–6
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 139:1b–3, 13–15 | **Response:** Psalm 139:14
Second Reading: Acts 13:22–26
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 1:76
Gospel Reading: Luke 1:57–66, 80
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The Church pauses today to celebrate the birth of John the Baptist—not just as a historical event, but as a moment that invites us to reflect on the way God prepares the world for His presence. John's birth marks a turning point: it signals that something new is about to begin. But it also reminds us that God's work often begins quietly, in hidden places, long before the world notices.

In the reading from Isaiah, we hear the voice of a servant who has been called by God from the womb. That call—to be a light to the nations—is echoed in John's life. Even before he is born, John is already marked by God's purpose. He is not the light himself, but he is to point to the Light. His role is not to take the spotlight but to make space for the One who is to come.

This is a helpful reminder for us in religious life. Our vocation, too, is not about drawing attention to ourselves, but about preparing the way for others to encounter Christ. That might happen through preaching, through listening, through walking with people in quiet ways. Often, like John, we are called to serve in ways that may not be seen or recognised, but which are still essential in God's plan.

The Psalm reminds us that every person is "wonderfully made." John's life, like each of our lives, is not accidental. God knows each of us, and calls each of us, with purpose. That sense of being called—even in our weakness or uncertainty—is something we hold onto. God works through our limits as well as our strengths. We don't have to be finished products before God begins His work in us.

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In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear how John's role was to call people to repentance. But his message was not one of harshness—it was a message of hope. He told people that change was possible, that God had not forgotten them, that something new was near. That is still our message today. We live in a world—especially here in Zimbabwe and across our region—where people are tired, struggling, often disappointed by political or economic failures. Our mission is not to stand above them and criticise, but to stand with them, and point to the hope that Christ brings.

In the Gospel, John's name is given not by tradition, but by revelation. John —"Yahweh is gracious." His name is a sign that God's mercy is breaking in. And Zechariah, who had been silent, now speaks. His words—words of praise and prophecy—show us what happens when we trust in God's plan, even when we don't fully understand it.

There's something very Jesuit about John's life. He listens for God's voice. He finds his identity in service. He is not afraid to decrease, so that Christ may increase. And he lives his mission with clarity, even when it costs him. For us, in our Jesuit context, the feast of John is a quiet invitation: to renew our sense of purpose, to recommit to the humble work of preparing the way, and to trust that God is still at work in us and through us.

So today we might reflect on:

- Where in my life am I being called to step back, to let Christ take centre stage?
- How can I help others prepare their hearts to receive Christ, especially those who are struggling or forgotten?
- Am I open to God working through me, even before I feel ready or qualified?

May John the Baptist help us remain faithful to our mission—not seeking to be seen, but always pointing to the One who is to come.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.

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