

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW
WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 17th August 2025: 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time
John the Baptist

This reflection considers his life and work – a man who came “to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him” (John 1:7). It also sets out how we might emulate him by being ourselves, following a call, and speaking out for justice.

The story of John the Baptist bridges the Old and New Testaments beginning 700 years before his birth as the prophet Isaiah foretells the “voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord”.

His lifelong dedication to holiness and unusual lifestyle can be a powerful reminder to us to prioritise our spiritual needs above our earthly desires; to put God first and trust that He will provide. Jesus reminds us of this in Matthew 6:31-33, saying: “Therefore do not worry, saying ‘what will we eat?’ or ‘what will we drink?’ or ‘what will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

In our rapidly changing world, our faith can sometimes feel out of step with the prevailing culture. It can sometimes be subject to ridicule, and, in some parts of the world, even persecution. Despite this, however, we can take courage from the example of John the Baptist that it’s ok to be different.

Each of us has a role to play, whether you’re called to Holy Orders, or whether you’re a parent or spouse, a teacher, a healer, an artist; we’ve all been blessed with gifts which we should use to the best of our ability in God’s service. John the Baptist also had a role: to prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

This idea of preparing a way for others, for facilitating a way for others to shine, can teach us a valuable lesson. Sometimes, our call isn’t to be centre stage but to use our gifts and strengths to allow the goodness, the skills, and the talents of others to shine through all the brighter. The scientist Sir Isaac Newton once said, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”. This is clearly a metaphor meaning that new knowledge and advancement are built upon the work of those who

came before. Perhaps good modern-day examples would be teachers, scientists and medical researchers.

Each of us has a role to play in building up the Kingdom of God, but we all need each other in all our respective roles to succeed.

John the Baptist's extraordinary life came to end when he challenged Herod over his decision to divorce and marry his brother's wife. After confronting Herod, John was arrested and eventually beheaded on the request of his new wife Herodias, through her daughter Salome.

John's decision to speak out for what he believed and for the laws of God eventually cost him his life, but his determination and unwavering integrity gives us courage to stand up and speak out against injustices in our world and to seek the truth.

From discrimination, to war, poverty, and hunger, people around the world suffer the impact of injustice every day of their lives, but John gives us the courage to challenge these injustices and bear witness to justice and truth.

Feast day 24 June. Also known as: Saint John the Forerunner in Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, John the Immerser in some Baptist Christian traditions and the prophet Zakariya in Islam.

Bernard Kellett