



This is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God who came into this world to save us because you love us. Your Incarnation fills me with hope. The only response I can give is to love you with all my heart, soul, strength and mind.

Petition: Jesus, help me to learn from St. John the Baptist how to bring others to you.

1. Making Jesus Known: The next few days have readings on John the Baptist. These lead up to this Sunday's feast of the Epiphany, which celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to the world. Tradition has linked several similar events to Epiphany. Although the first one is the coming of the Magi to Bethlehem, Christ's Baptism in the Jordan is also a key moment of revelation — of epiphany — of Jesus' mission and divinity. Thus, although the Baptism of the Lord has its own feast day a week after Epiphany, the two events have a common result: They make known the truth of Jesus. A first question we need to ask ourselves is: What am I, a believer in Christ, doing to make the truth of Jesus known

to others?

2. The Power of Humility: In this reading, John the Baptist demonstrates the attitude fundamental to making Christ known: humility. John the Baptist had the chance to be considered the Messiah, the Christ. True, eventually the deception would become known, but for a while he could have had all of Israel at his feet. All too often today, people give in to temptation and compromise their principles to get glory and power for a day — think of businessmen who inflate their company's profits, or scientists who fake their results. Their inevitable downfall is tragic. St. John the Baptist knows that the only way he can serve God and fulfill his mission in life is to direct all glory to God and none to himself, never presuming to be more than he is. We, too, can live as true Christians and make Jesus present to others only if we put aside our own pride and vanity.

3. Living Love: What really makes John the Baptist's message effective is that he doesn't just preach his message; he is his message. He preaches penance, but first he lives it, going out into the desert and living an ascetic life. He baptizes with water, but first he gets into the water. If we want to make Jesus known to others, we first have to know him ourselves. We cannot preach the essence of the Gospel, the message of love, if we don't live love in our daily lives. We can't criticize, judge others, and always "look out for number one" (where "one" is ourselves) and still hope to be an effective apostle of Christ. However, if with the help of God's grace, we do our best to put love into action, then words will hardly be necessary. Our example alone will change people's lives.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, when I look at myself and my life, I see that too often I have been selfish, focused on what I enjoy and on what I want. Help me to love you above all things. Help me want to make you known by living love, even at the cost of my own pride and comfort.

Resolution: I will make an extra effort today to show through my actions what it means to love Christ and one another.