



Scripture nugget - He must increase and I decrease (cf. John 3:30)

John answered and said, " You yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before Him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete. He must increase; I must decrease." (John 3:28-30).

Filial, unquestioning obedience to God is the key to greatness. John the Baptist was no ordinary prophet. He was the cousin of our Lord Who sanctified him when our Blessed Mother Mary, pregnant with Baby Jesus, visited her cousin Elizabeth, John's mother. Elizabeth exclaimed that as soon as Mary's greetings was heard, the child in her womb leapt for joy (cf. Luke 1:44). John the Baptist received the power of the Holy Spirit from Jesus even before he was born! God gifted John the Baptist the opportunities to become great in His eyes. The work of all the Old Testament prophets culminated in the mission given to John the Baptist. He was the fore-runner of the Christ, the Messiah. John had a great understanding of his mission. *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." (John 1:23).* An important mission necessitates substantial preparation and training. Angel Gabriel instructed that the baby, John be consecrated to God (cf. Luke 1:15). A high mission entails a high degree of filial obedience which requires a high level of self-denial. John the Baptist allowed himself to be completely led by the Spirit since childhood. *The child grew and became strong in Spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel (Luke 1:80).* For the sake of God's Kingdom John accepted his life to be one of terrible hardship in the desert that was burning hot by day and freezing cold at night. Day in, day out, he endured locusts and wild honey for food! John wore clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt.

Witnessing with unwavering courage to the Truth before the lowly, the elite and the royalty. Though highly unconventional and perhaps appearing a bit wild in appearance, John the Baptist had great success in his public ministry. His message is sincere repentance of one's sins and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. He preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Big crowds from all over were coming to John for baptism. John chided the Sadducees and Pharisees, the hypocritical elites of the Jewish religious community, warning them to be sincere in their repentance and to make real reform in their lives. He rebuked King Herod for all the evil he had done and for taking his brother's wife, Herodias to be his wife. For daring to speak the uncomfortable truth to the king, he was imprisoned and subsequently beheaded while in prison.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You blessed St John the Baptist with great success in his ministry because of the way He corresponded to Your grace. He understood his mission perfectly and though he was in the limelight, he derived his joy from the glory given to You. Like You he was obedient to his mission unto death. Like You, he lived an exemplary life of sacrifice and hardship in line with his mission. Like You, he lived solely to do God's will, so closely did he embrace his mission and his identity. No wonder You said he was the greatest of men. Lord, may You increase and I decrease so that I can witness more courageously to the truth like John the Baptist. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.