**SATURDAY JUNE 25 – XII WEEK O.T. [C]**

**BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

**All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him. The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.**

**Zechariah reveals what this child will be in his song of blessing to the Lord. He blesses Him for He has raised up a horn for our salvation. Here are his words:** **"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant, even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” In order to understand this announcement of Zechariah we must remind what happened in his house with the visit of the Virgin Mary. Elizabeth acknowledges the Virgin Mary: “Mother of my Lord:” She proclaims Her Blessed and Beatific. Blessed is the fruit of her womb. Elizabeth confesses that Mary is the Blessed Mother of the Messiah:** **During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." (Lk 1, 39-45) With the birth of each of his Messiah, the Lord has fulfilled each of his promise, each of his word, each of his oath. The Son of the Virgin Mary truly is the Messiah of the Lord.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 1,57-66.80**

**When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.** **The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.**

**Who is John the Baptist in relation to the Messiah, then? This truth is revealed by the Angel Gabriel:** **"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of (the) Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord." (Lk 1, 13-17)**

**John will have to walk before the Lord with the Spirit and the power of Elijah. He will have to prepare the hearts so that they accept the Messiah of the Lord, in whom is the salvation of each child of Abraham. Not only. But also of each child of Adam. Abraham, too, is a son of Adam. The Messiah comes for all the children of Adam. The Messiah is gift of the mercy and of the tenderness of the Lord. This truth, too, must always be remembered:** **“Because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Who is in darkness and in the shadow of death? Every man. Which steps must be directed on the way of peace? Those of every man. Truly is the Messiah the gift of God to the world. This truth is announced by Christ Jesus himself:** “**No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (Jn 3, 13-18) Here is who Christ Jesus is: the gift of God for the world. Now Christ Jesus is entrusted each of his disciple. It is he who must accomplish what the Father has accomplished. Mother of God, grant that we, too, give Jesus to the entire world as you did.**