

4th Wednesday of Advent 2020

MALACHI 3:1-4, 23-24

*Thus says the Lord GOD:
Lo, I am sending my messenger
to prepare the way before me;
And suddenly there will come to the temple
the LORD whom you seek,
And the messenger of the covenant whom
you desire.*

*Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.
But who will endure the day of his coming?
And who can stand when he appears?*

*For he is like the refiner's fire,
or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and
purifying silver, and he will purify the sons of
Levi,
Refining them like gold or like silver
that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD.*

*Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem
will please the LORD, as in the days of old, as
in years gone by.*

*Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet,
Before the day of the LORD comes,
the great and terrible day,
To turn the hearts of the fathers to their
children, and the hearts of the children to
their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the land with doom.*

PSALM 25:4-5AB, 8-9, 10 AND 14

R. (see Luke 21:28) Lift up your heads and see;
your redemption is near at hand.

*Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.*

*Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way.*

*All the paths of the LORD are kindness and
constancy
toward those who keep his covenant and his
decrees.*

*The friendship of the LORD is with those who
fear him,
and his covenant, for their instruction.*

LUKE 1:57-66

*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.*

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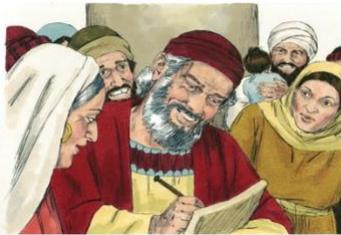
John is his name.

These four short simple words cap a story with mysterious twists and turns.

In review, an aged priest, Zachariah, took his turn in entering the temple to burn incense when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him with blessings that his wife, Elizabeth, who had been barren and now also aged, would bear a son who would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Zachariah was told to call his name John.

Zachariah protested in disbelief. In response, he was struck dumb.

When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, the whole family gathered on the eighth day to celebrate the boy's circumcision and naming. They all assumed the boy's name would be Zachariah, like his father's, according to tradition.



Inspired by the Spirit, Elizabeth countered and said no, that he was to be called John. Family members protested and turned to Zachariah. Zachariah asked for a writing tablet. He wrote, *John is his name.*

And as miraculously as he had been struck dumb, immediately he cried out with blessings for God.

The display dismayed the crowd. The story spread throughout the region. All who heard wondered, *What, then, will this child be?*

Being named differently than one's father implies that the boy would have a different destiny.ⁱ John grew up to be known as John the Baptizer, who was so instrumental in preparing the way for his younger cousin, Jesus.

One of our Church Fathers, Origen of Alexander (c. 250 AD) provides insight:

Zacharias is by interpretation "remembering God," but John signifies "pointing to." Now "memory" relates to something absent, "pointing to," to something present. But John was not about to set forth the memory of God as absent, but with his finger to point him out as present, saying, Behold the Lamb of God."ⁱⁱ

Naming is mysterious ... for everyone. Some parents agonize with each other for months. Some names are awarded on the spur of the moment. Different cultures dictate different norms. But they all have meaning.

Some of the meaning is ascribed by the ones doing the naming. Layers of meaning are attached by others. The individual themselves, develops values and character that make their name stand for something.

As the good Lord gives us extra days, we continue to develop and grow. Even when health can diminish with longevity, our character grows with maturity. I'd like to think I am "more" than I was ten years ago.

We are not done with our name and our name is not done with us.

As we prepare for the advent of the Incarnation, may we pray for the grace to become God's answer to the question, *What, then, will this child be?*

Have a Merry Christmas and may I confer the Advent Solemn Blessing upon you:

*May the almighty and merciful God,
by whose grace you have placed your faith
in the First Coming of his Only Begotten Son
and yearn for his coming again,
sanctify you by the radiance of Christ's Advent
And enrich you with his blessing.*

R. Amen

*As you run the race of this present life,
may he make you firm in faith,
joyful in hope and active in charity.*

R. Amen

*So that, rejoicing now with devotion
at the Redeemer's coming in the flesh,
you may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life
when he comes again in majesty.*

R. Amen

*And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever.*

R. Amen

X

ⁱ Robert L. Deffinbough, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-why-john-was-not-named-little-zach-luke-157-80>

ⁱⁱ — Catena Aurea: Volume 1-4 by Thomas Aquinas