

Saint John the Baptist a Model Servant

Today is the second of Tout, September 12, the church celebrates the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist. The church commemorates this great saint several times each year, on the annunciation, on his birth, his martyrdom, and other feasts dedicated for moving his head and body. He is the one that Jesus said about him that he is **greater than a prophet**, and that among those born of women there is no greater prophet than him (Luke 7:28). He also said that he was **the burning and shining lamp** (John 5:35). The bible witnessed to him that he is the **angel sent from God** (Matthew 11:10) to prepare the way before the coming of Christ.

St. John the Baptist did not do any miracles (John 10:41), nonetheless, his fiery words and his faithful ministry pierced and influenced the hearts more than any wonders or miracles. Therefore, many people from different walks of life were influenced by his sermons and guidance. They repented at his hands confessing their sins (Mark 1: 5), even Herod, who later beheaded him, also listened to him with pleasure and revered him knowing that he is a righteous saint (Mark 6:20)

Through four profound phrases uttered by this great saint, and were recorded by Saint John the beloved in his Gospel (John 3), we can discover some of the secrets of the power of saint John the Baptist's ministry and the reasons for its success:

1 - ***"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven."*** (John 3:27) This is a very important principle in life and in the ministry. God is the one who gives, the one who takes, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens (Rev. 3:7), the Almighty, and also the fountain of all goodness, righteousness, and glory. Therefore, a **Christian should not expect anything from people, but only wait on the Lord**. A Christian should not long for glory from people, but rather only seeks glory from God, and when he hopes or seeks something, **he looks towards heaven and not earth**. A Christian strives and carries out his responsibilities faithfully, but understands that God is He who grants success, bestows the gifts and gives blessings. God is He who helps whenever help ceases from man, He is the one who protects, when the earthly means of protection are absent, and He is the giver of gifts, the true fountain of life, light and joy.

2 - ***"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice..."*** (John 3:29). This means that the faithful servant never allows people to be drawn to him without leading them to Christ. The Lord Jesus is the beloved bridegroom and the desire of every human soul, but the servant is the friend of the bridegroom who leads people to their divine bridegroom. **He gathers people around Christ and not around himself**. It is not appropriate that he takes the center spot in the service, for the center is Christ the bridegroom. As to the servant, he has a special place with the bridegroom; he is the friend of the bridegroom whose heart is always filled with joy as **he continuously enjoys the bridegroom's voice**. He enjoys the words of the Bible and rejoices in it everyday, he also rejoices in every soul that embrace the bridegroom to take her portion in His love and grace.

3 - ***"He must increase, but I must decrease."*** (John 3:30) this is the pinnacle of understanding the ministry, **that is the servant ought to gradually disappears from the lives of the people so that Christ gradually grows in those lives**. This also applies to the personal life of every human being, **the more man denies himself, the more the divine work grows in his heart**. The more man draws away from the glimmer of fame and glory of the world, the more Christ clearly dawns with glister in his life, and the sweet aroma of Christ exudes naturally from him. But he who refuses to deny himself, and wants to increase, it will certainly be at the expense of the growth of grace in his life. Consequently, his life is increasingly immersed in darkness, because Christ is decreasing in his life.

4 - ***"For God does not give the Spirit by measure."*** (John 3:34) This wonderful fact that was declared to us by St John the prophet reveals to us the generosity of God, and His outpouring gifts to anyone who opens his heart to the love of God and the work of His grace. God is very rich and wants His children also to be rich in grace, rich in love, rich in peace, rich in righteousness and good deeds. He is ready to give generously and without counting to anyone who asks in humility, and strives with faith and perseverance. Then, this man would infinitely grow in grace and spiritual stature. Here we realize that **the more we dedicate time for prayer, metanoias, liturgies, praise, discipleship, spiritual reading, and acts of mercy, the more the Spirit outpours in our hearts and bring fruits in our lives, so that we become so rich that we overflow to others as well!**

May the blessing of the great saint, John the Baptist, the shining angel, and the heedful servant be with us, Amen.

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