

Thursday 17th December 2020

Advent, Thursday of 3rd week

Reading: Lk.1,59-64

V.63a *"He asked for a writing tablet ... and wrote, 'His name is John'."*

What is obvious to all around, that their boy will be named after his father Zechariah, is rejected by Elizabeth, his mother. He is to be called 'John'. Why, they ask? What could possibly account for such a contravention of tradition and culture? Name-giving is an act expressing belonging and the call to honour one's roots. Surely, Zechariah would put things right, if only he could hear and speak. But great is the surprise is when Zechariah reveals that indeed the boy's name is to be 'John', as instructed by the angel Gabriel.

As soon as it's made known Zechariah is enabled to hear and to speak. And again something not at all obvious to all around happens – Zechariah uses his newfound speech to praise God. (What he couldn't when the angel announced the good news, he now can and does!)

In words of praise he shows that the boy's calling is not to carry on with the old but to prepare for the new that God is about to do – the new, because God will open the hearts of his people and they will belong to him and be a people of God's praise (think of Jesus opening the ears of the deaf and healing the mute!).

John is called by the name God chose for him and to point to the name of the one who shall come after him. We must hear this with Is.43 in the background, which speaks of the name of Jesus and about what that name will mean for all who will call on it: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

Lord God, open our hearts in praise to you for blessing us with the name of Jesus Christ, the name above all other names. Amen