

Feast of the birthday of St John the Baptist

24/6/26

There's something in these passages today, and in the Feast, about allowing God to be the determiner of our vocations rather than seeking to determine it for ourselves. I have before me a delightful cartoon by Leunig entitled 'We were wrong.'

"In a previous issue, we said, "Seize the day." This was a mistake. What we meant was: 'Hold the day carefully. Give thanks for the day. The day is a precious and beautiful thing . . . embrace the day tenderly. Share the day among yourselves and enjoy it remembering that our days are numbered'. When we said, 'Seize the day', we didn't know what came over us. We apologise . . ."

There is a sense, then, that we can be relaxed about our vocation. It will find us rather than us finding it, and it will find us as each day does by surprises. The Benedictus is a hymn to this, a response to what God does for us rather than what we do for God. The beginnings of vocation and each day must needs be difficult to test our vocation, or rather our willingness to surrender it and each day to God. What is God doing to us now? one might ask, and I apologise, what I should have said is 'What wonders is the Lord preparing for me today if I serve him?' In the realm of the mundane, each event may seem inconsequential, random, of no great import. In the realm of the divine, nothing is wasted, nothing without meaning, nothing less than God at work in all things. The parents of John the Baptist relax at last and accept God's will. They exercise faith and only later realise the immensity of what has happened to them. They beget a son who will in his turn become a precursor of Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. And John the Baptist is in his turn willing not to seize the day, but to allow it to mature, to present him too with the surprise of his cousin Jesus as Messiah. By knowing that he himself is not the Messiah, he opens the way for another. This is revelation at work - the wonderment of God's will determining our vocations. I apologise, when I say 'determining our will,' I mean inviting us to join in God's wonderful work of creation, which remains essentially a mystery to us until it unfolds, until we say 'yes' to it as it comes to us in the surprises of each day.

