

In these Advent reflections we have been following the pattern of the candles on the Advent Wreath. The first week was about the Patriarchs and last week we reflected on the Prophets. This week it is the turn of St John the Baptist.

No while Zechariah was serving as a priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the Temple of the Lord and burn incense...And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. St Luke 1:8, 9, 11.

The story of St John the Baptist has deep Old Testament roots. It begins in the Temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah enters the sacred space at the hour of the evening sacrifice and the fragrant rising of the incense is a symbol of prayer. Time and place are holy and at this moment where the worship of God's people on earth is joined with the worship of heaven a new step is taken in the preparations God is making for Jesus. Zechariah receives a message of the new covenant God is making. The son that he and Elizabeth his wife will have is to usher in a new era for the people of God. Time and eternity meet in Zechariah's dutiful offering of worship in a powerful new way.

The awesomeness of this particular offering of worship by Zechariah holds true for us. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist time and eternity are meeting, it is a moment of encounter with the living God who is calling us and sending us. We should spend a moment today reflecting on the role that sacred space and sacred time have in our lives and ask God to help us never to take them for granted.

A prayer for this week.

God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord.