

JUNE 24, 2018



SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



ISAIAH 49:1-6

PSALM 139:1-3, 13-14, 14-15

ACTS 13:22-26

LUKE 1:57-66, 80

REFLECTION

Sometimes, what we expect and what we get are two very different things. As I was preparing to graduate from college, I decided to apply for a year-long Catholic volunteer program based in Denver. I learned all about the program and just knew it was a perfect fit: I would use my gifts to serve the poor, live in community, and grow in my faith. What could possibly be better than that? I went through the application and interview process, only to receive an e-mail informing me that I had not been accepted to the program. The path I had been dreaming about for months had abruptly come to an end, and I was devastated. A few weeks later, I found a posting for a youth ministry job at a parish in Pittsburgh. I quickly moved through the hiring process. The parish was a great fit. I was offered the position, and within a month, I was driving a U-Haul across the country to begin my new adventure—an adventure that I wasn't expecting, but that contained countless blessings.

In his book, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, Fr. James Martin, SJ, often gives God a unique title: the "God of Surprises." We see the God of Surprises at work when Mary says yes to being the mother of Jesus; when Jesus chooses simple fishermen as his disciples; when Jesus completely bucks social expectations to eat with tax collectors and sinners. We especially see the God of Surprises at work when Jesus rises from the dead after being in the tomb for three days. In today's Gospel, we read about the birth of John the Baptist. Zechariah, John's father, served as a priest in the temple, and both he and Elizabeth came from families of the priestly class. It only made sense, then, that their son would follow in Zechariah's footsteps by serving as a priest as well. Little did they know that the God of Surprises had other plans!

ACTION

The God of Surprises calls each of us to bring forth God's Kingdom—to be a light to the nations and to prepare the way of the Lord. The challenge comes when God's plan doesn't match up with ours. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, can we trust that even if things don't go according to our plans, the God of Surprises is still at work? Take some time to ponder this today.



JOURNALING QUESTIONS



- When has the God of Surprises acted in your life? What was your response?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to trust in the God of Surprises?