

**St. Barnabas Episcopal Church**

**2 Revolutionary Road**

**Ardsley, New York 10502**

**The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost:**

**Proper 10 (B)**

**July 11, 2021**

**DRAFT**

**“Caring for the Outcast”**

**10 AM Sermon**

**by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**The Holy Gospel according to**

**Mark 6:14-29**

King Herod heard of Jesus and his disciples, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married

her. For John had been telling Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me

for whatever you wish, and I will give it.”

And he solemnly swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.”

She went out and said to her

mother, “What should I ask for?” She

replied, “The head of John the baptizer.”

Immediately she rushed back to the king and

requested, “I want you to give me at once

the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

The king was deeply grieved; yet out of

regard for his oaths and for the guests, he

did not want to refuse her. Immediately the

king sent a soldier of the guard with orders

to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded

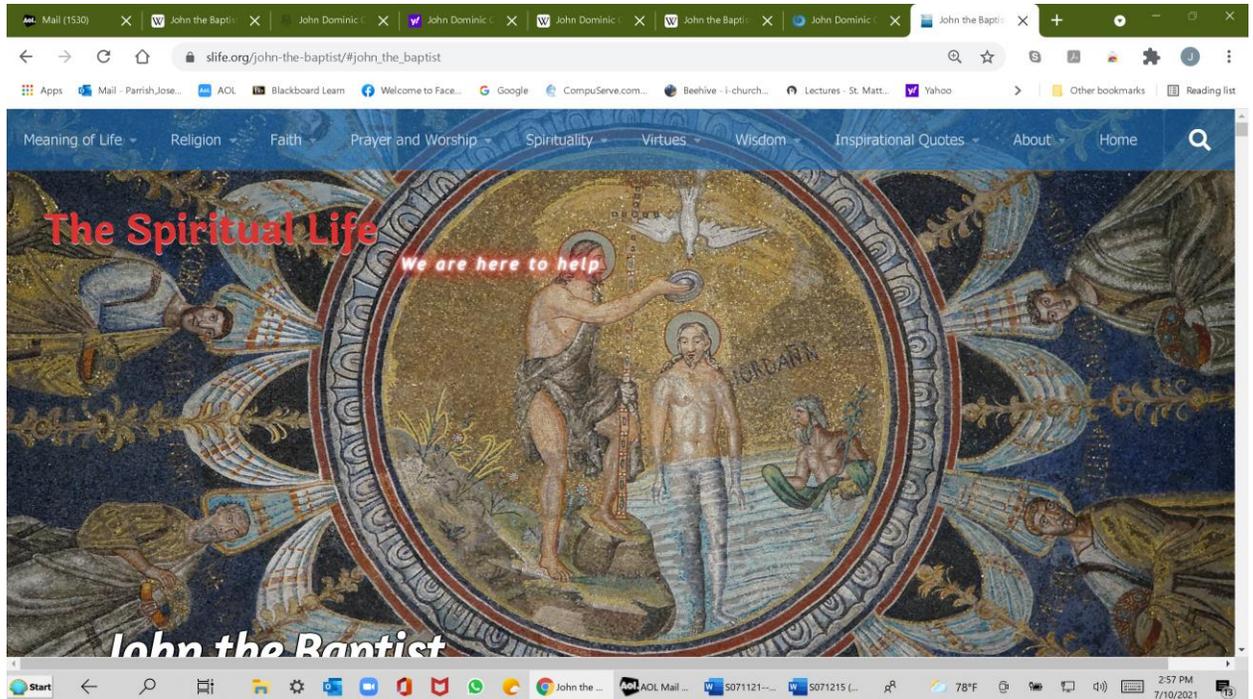
him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Help us, Dear Lord, to trust your love and your care and then care for others.

Amen.

**Let us care for the last, the least and the lost.**

[Some research follows the sermon.]



=== **The sermon begins here:**

In the aftermath of the Iraq War of 2003, an ancient group of followers of John the Baptist called the Mandaean community of Iraq, which used to number 60,000–70,000

persons, this community collapsed; most of the community relocated to nearby Iran, Syria and Jordan, or formed diaspora communities beyond the Middle East. The other community of Iranian Mandaeans has also been dwindling as a result of religious persecution over those two decades.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandaeans>

Mandaeans in Iraq before the 2003 U.S. led invasion came under attack by Islamic extremists following the initial stages of the war, forcing all but a few thousand to flee the country.”

One of my medical school classmates last year was born in Iraq and now lives in Boston. She taught me to say EE-RAK and EYE-RAN. There is apparently some distrust between the two countries that has endured.

As I noted, in her country of EE-RAK, there was a settlement of a group of people who called themselves Mandaneans. She never mentioned them, but my research about John the Baptist found some interesting facts about the Mandaneans who have largely moved out of EE-RAK and some came to the United States. Their

headquarters is in Morristown, New Jersey. They are one of many persecuted minorities who have found hope and freedom in the US.

For over twenty years in addition to being the Rector of an Episcopal Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey, I was a chaplain at the Federal Immigration Detention Center in Elizabeth just up the street from the Newark Liberty International Airport. There I met many who were displaced from their homes who were seeking asylum in the US. My ministry there was initiated with the help of the Episcopal Presiding Bishop's Fund, now

called the Episcopal Relief and Development, a group I hope you will support generously. Beside service in support of communities following natural disasters, Episcopal Relief and Development also supports ministry to the disadvantaged and immigrants.

[Go to this site to donate to Episcopal Relief and Development:

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-you-can-do/give/donate-now/individual-donation/> ]

The Mandaneans herald from the time of John the Baptist and hold him in highest

esteem to this day. This group was on the mind of the New Testament Gospel writers when they penned phrases like John the Baptist saying he must grow lesser as Jesus grows greater. The Gospels' hope was that the many followers of John the Baptist at Jesus' time and beyond would recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of the world. For the Mandaneans, this has not happened in spite of the Gospel writers' hope. They continue to revere John the Baptist.

My Iraqi friend is likely a Muslim, we have not discussed religion, as are many of

my other classmates at this international medical school in the Caribbean island of Antigua. And many other of my classmates are Hindu since the school is owned by an Indian corporation. Many of my professors are from India, if not most. So I am learning international medicine even though I am planning to practice in the US, as are many of my classmates.

The human body has a few unique genetic markers that tell us from what part of the world our ancestor's hailed. Those who have done the '23 and Me' testing find that their ancestry may be quite different

from what their family traditions may have indicated. The genetic study is an interesting process that I have not used, but not long ago I learned my supposed ancestry as “Scotch-Irish” was actually apparently “Welch”, from Wales, the western tip of England where many ships set sail for the US. As someone has noted, all of us are from somewhere else. 😊

During my time as an active federal detention center Episcopal chaplain, several changes occurred. How did I get my start? After a problematic management company suffered several setbacks in 1999 and a new

company was put in charge, I was recruited by some Jesuit members volunteering there to do a Bible study for the immigrants. One thing and another unfortunately led to the expulsion of my Jesuit friends, and I was left more or less 'holding the bag.' For my efforts, an editorial in the 'Village Voice' newspaper of the time excoriated me because I did not leave the detention center with the Jesuits. That is probably my one claim to fame. Ha. I felt the detainees needed some voice inside that spread the love of Christ. And the Episcopal Church affirmed so that at that time. At first I was

the only chaplain approved to enter that high security detention center: the FBI fingerprinted me, searched for any family or friends or others that might have any negative reports about me, and apparently were satisfied that I was OK. I was then able to enter the facility every week for about two decades until I finally retired; my replacement bowed out when he got a call to be a priest in charge of a church in the Diocese of Long Island, and then covid struck soon thereafter, and no one outside has been allowed in the center due to the concern about health safety in those

confined spaces. But for many years I was able to help at least some to get placement for detainees in safe houses or with relatives in the northeast area and elsewhere.

Anytime there were ‘trouble spots’ somewhere in the world, we would often see a large influx of people from that area.

After volunteering a few years there, the Detention Center decided to allow a few more to be certified as chaplains; and the last time I attended the required semi-annual training, there were over a hundred other chaplains from a myriad of faiths, largely Christian, but several others as well. If a

particular religious group had no representative chaplain, the center would sometimes gather them in a room where I was to be a chaplain for them. However, one large group of Buddhists thought it was a bit humorous that I was assigned to them although I knew zero Mandarin. Over the years I did learn a modicum of Spanish that helped me found a Spanish Episcopal congregation inside my Anglo church which now has become an Hispanic mission of the Diocese of New Jersey. And I was able to minister to Latinx immigrants in the facility.

It is amazing how God works if we are open to the Spirit.

The care of the outcast is not only on the base of the Statue of Liberty, it is also a mandate of Jesus Christ. Jesus sent his twelve disciples out to preach the gospel, to heal the sick and drive out evil spirits: In Matthew 10 -- Jesus “called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness--Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.” That was quite a tall order, so when the twelve saw their task was indeed

huge, Jesus sent out seventy-two others to help take up that task. From them we all have the same charge. After the first sendings, in Luke 22 Jesus revises his orders and commands: “[Jesus] said to them, ‘But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.’” As Jesus approaches his crucifixion, the resistance to his message has grown very strong, and his new orders advise taking money and a bag and even a sword—apparently limited to two swords for every twelve disciples we learn from other verses. This seems a bit contrary to

the idea of his disciples going bare handed, but the situation apparently demanded it.

I recall a situation at my home parish church, St. Bartholomew's in Manhattan, when one of my tasks was to get two security guards to protect the Easter offering—I was a bit set back when they asked me if the guards asked if they were to come armed. I assured them that that was not needed. However, now in some congregations I hear that there could be some who may have a sword or two. What a time we live in.

Peter did cut off an ear of one trying to arrest his Master, but Jesus healed the person and admonished Peter that those who live by the sword will perish by the sword. (Matthew 26:52). That would be a bit of a deterrent in current day congregations about having any weaponry.

Jesus called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-3).

Since I had trained in medical sciences, it became clear to me that a medical degree

was something I might seek and thus my current task to complete my medical education--but surely not everyone is called to get a medical degree—it is a bit of a daunting task, believe me.

But preaching often brings healing along with it; the troubled are calmed, and I have seen first hand those with drug addictions and other problems healed by just preaching the Gospel of the love of Christ. Jesus does indeed heal, and sometimes we have witnessed that in our own lives, haven't we?

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. John plowed the way and planted

the seed. The result was the incredibly productive ministry of our Lord. Sometimes we may be called to pave the way for Christ; sometimes we may be called to sow the seed of Christ's invincible love. Sometimes we may lead others into the Kingdom of God.

Let us not grow weary because God is with us at every step of the way.

Amen.

## Description:

John the Baptist prepares the way for Christ's ministry. We are called to do the same and be Christ's hands and hearts for others.

Tags:

Jesus, John, Baptist, Mandeans, sword,  
forerunner, disciples, Twelve, seventy-two,  
detention, New, Jersey, chaplain, Episcopal  
Relief and Development, missionaries,  
swords, preach, heal, teach

Some research for the sermon follows:

New Testament scholar, John Dominic Crossan, has noted that the difference between John and Jesus was that John the Baptist ‘had a monopoly, but Jesus had a franchise.’

[See more at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_the\\_Baptist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist)

[st](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist) ]

Crossan, John Dominic (2007), *God and Empire*, London: HarperCollins, p. 117 ff

Professor Crossan's comment refers to the fact that eventually Jesus' disciples would be baptizing far more than John himself, even though John began the practice of baptism as a sign of repentance. John's own disciples were not baptizing; only John himself did that; but, after Jesus' death, all of Jesus' disciples apparently were doing baptisms. And in fact, all Christians everywhere are authorized to baptize someone in the cases of urgent need, regardless of whether the baptizer is ordained or not. John was 'over the counter,' but Jesus was 'The Prescription.' John had

a process, but Jesus was ‘The Product.’  
John was bronze, but Jesus was far more  
than silver, gold, and diamonds.

The Book of Acts portrays some  
disciples of John becoming followers of  
Jesus. See in Acts 18:24–19:6 a  
development not reported by the gospels  
except for the early case of Andrew, Simon  
Peter’s brother in John 1:35–42.

<https://slife.org/john-the-baptist/>

John’s knowledge of Jesus varies across  
gospels. In the Gospel of Mark, John

preaches of a coming leader, but shows no signs of recognizing that Jesus is this leader. In Matthew, however, John immediately recognizes Jesus and John questions his own worthiness to baptize Jesus. In both Matthew and Luke, John later dispatches disciples to question Jesus about his status, asking “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?” In Luke, John is a familial relative of Jesus whose birth was foretold by Gabriel. In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist himself sees the spirit descend like a dove and he explicitly

preaches that Jesus is the Son of God.

<https://slife.org/john-the-baptist/>

The Church of Jesus Christ teaches that John the Baptist appeared on the banks of the Susquehanna River near Harmony Township, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, as a resurrected being to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on May 15, 1829, and ordained them to the Aaronic Priesthood. <https://slife.org/john-the-baptist/>

An account of John the Baptist is found in all extant manuscripts of the Antiquities of

the Jews (book 18, chapter 5, 2) by Flavius Josephus (37–100 AD). An account of John the Baptist is found in all extant manuscripts of the Antiquities of the Jews (book 18, chapter 5, 2) by Flavius Josephus (37–100 AD). “Josephus, Flavius.” In: Cross, F. L. (ed.) (2005) The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press

<https://slife.org/john-the-baptist/>

Divergences between the Josephus passage’s presentation and the biblical accounts of John include baptism for those whose souls

have already been “purified beforehand by righteousness” is for purification of the body, not general repentance of sin (Mark 1:4). Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan differentiates between Josephus’s account of John and Jesus, saying, “John had a monopoly, but Jesus had a franchise.” To get baptized, Crossan writes, you went only to John; to stop the movement one only needed to stop John (therefore his movement ended with his death). Jesus invited all to come and see how he and his companions had already accepted the government of God, entered it and were living it. Such a

communal praxis was not just for himself, but could survive without him, unlike John's movement.[ Crossan, John Dominic (2007), *God and Empire*, London: HarperCollins, p. 117 ff]

Michael H. Crosby, Ph.D., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA; Capuchin friar and priest; in his paper "Why Didn't John the Baptist Commit Himself to Jesus as a Disciple?" stated there was "no biblical evidence indicating that John the Baptist ever became a disciple of Jesus." He conveys that John's concept, of what a

messiah should be, was in contrast to how Jesus presented himself, and kept him from becoming a disciple of Jesus. Crosby identifies 25 points in the Gospel accounts that lead to the conclusion that John's effectiveness as a "Precursor" in encouraging others to follow Jesus was very minimal, since the scriptures record only two of his own followers became Jesus' disciples. Crosby noted, while many others believed Jesus' miracles, there is no record of these "signs" convincing John, who continued a separate baptismal ministry, creating disciples, resulting in a community

that still exists in parts of the Middle East.

[Zurutuza, Karlos. “Disciples of St John the Baptist under attack”. [www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com).]

John the Baptist is considered the chief prophet of the Mandaeans, and plays a large part in some of their writings, including the *Ginza Rba* and the *Draša D-Iahia* (The Mandaean Book of John). They view John as the only true Messiah, and are opposed to Jesus. The Mandaean scriptures state: “If the carpenter [Jesus] has joined together the god, who then has joined together the carpenter?” [“Baptisms of Yeshu in ancient

Mandaic scrolls – The Order of Nazorean Essenes”. [Essenes.net](http://Essenes.net). Archived from the original on October 1, 2012. Retrieved October 20, 2012.]

[Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press 2005 ISBN978-0-19-280290-3), article ‘Mandaeans’

Willis Barnstone, Marvin Meyer The Gnostic Bible: Revised and Expanded Edition Shambhala Publications 2009 ISBN978-0-834-82414-0 page 550]

[“Baptisms of Yeshu in ancient Mandaic scrolls – The Order of Nazorean Essenes”. [Essenes.net](http://Essenes.net). Archived from the original on

October 1, 2012. Retrieved October 20, 2012.]

Above is from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia on “John the Baptist”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_the\\_Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist)

= = =

[“Iraqi Mandaean Priest Fawzi Masboob, of Detroit, Mich., top picture, baptizes groom Bashar Askar, of The Hague, Holland, during a wedding ceremony on the banks of Lake Quinsigamond, in Worcester, Mass., early Sunday, May 31, 2009.]

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120306012853/http://www.hollandsentinel.com/lifestyle/x1558731033/Saving-the-people-killing-the-faith>

By RUSSELL CONTRERA

The Associated Press

Posted Aug 07, 2009 @ 10:01 PM

<>

(The Primary Market)<>

Worcester, Mass. —

“Suha Abdula walks through the streets of her new country, acutely aware that no one notices her.

“Silent are the voices that called her “dirty” in her native Iraq. Gone are the fingers that pointed and threatened as she passed. Absent are the bombs that destroyed her husband’s store — all because she and her family practice Mandaeanism (man-DAY’-an-is-um), an ancient religion that views John the Baptist as its great teacher.

“Here, in this quiet of this central Massachusetts city, Abdula and 150 others have formed the largest Iraqi Mandaean refugee settlement in the United States. Here, they are not “infidels,” not subject to

forced conversions, rape or even murder by Islamic extremists.

“Now I can breathe,” says Abdula, 36.

“It’s so peaceful.”

Yet in her freedom comes a newfound fear: If no cares we’re here, who will care if we disappear?

That is the struggle across the globe for Mandaean, whose ranks are fading quickly. Away from the land they had called home for more than two millennia, and without a permanent priest or proper place of worship for the next generation, the refugees worry

their tiny, ancient religion is facing extinction.”

“We’re saving the people but killing the faith,” said Wisam Breegi, a Mandaean doctor and U.S. citizen who has helped bring dozens of Mandaean refugees to Massachusetts. “But right now we’re in survival mode.”

“Since 2007, about 1,200 Iraqi Mandaean refugees have been resettled in the United States, according to the U.S. State Department. The groups are scattered — mostly in Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, Colorado and California — and that is a

problem when it comes to sustaining the faith, said Suhaib Nashi, president of the Mandaean Associations Union based in Morristown, N.J.

“Mandaeanism does not allow conversion, and some believe intermarriage means expulsion from the faith. Mandeans also need a body of running water for their ritual baptisms and guidance from one of the world’s two dozen remaining Mandaean priests.

“We are in a dilemma and need to come together,” Nashi said. “If not, we will fade away.”

Traced to the period of the Roman Empire, experts say Mandaeanism is a branch of the Gnostic movement that doesn't view Jesus as a Messiah, but contains Judeo-Christian elements. For years, the Tigris River was the setting of the religion's all-important regular baptisms.

In the 1990s about 70,000 Mandaeans lived in Iraq. Today, only around 3,000 or so remain.

Nathaniel Deutsch, co-director of the Center for Jewish Studies at University of California Santa Cruz, said the mass

Mandaean exodus was an unintended consequence of the Iraq war.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120306012853/http://www.hollandsentinel.com/lifestyle/x1558731033/Saving-the-people-killing-the-faith>

=