



Handout for week of 6/18/18 Luke 1:57-66, 80 & Is. 49: 1-6

Birth of John the Baptist

[www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Connie May © 5/19/18

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Sacred Invitation](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Prophecy](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[The Naming of John the Baptist](#)

**Is. 49: 1** Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye peoples, from far: the LORD hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name; **2** And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He concealed me; **3** And He said unto me: 'Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' **4** But I said: 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.' **5** And now saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, and that Israel be gathered unto Him--for I am honourable in the eyes of the LORD, and my God is become my strength-- **6** Yea, He saith: 'It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the offspring of Israel; I will also give thee for a light of the nations, that My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.'



The painting depicts the prophet Isaiah at the moment where he is called to prophecy. The approaching angel holds a piece of burning coal to his lips with tongs and so brings about the forgiveness of his sins. Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord and agrees to his mission.

**COMMENTARY:**

These verses come from the so-called "Servant Songs" of Second Isaiah. The author wrote these verses during waning days of the Babylonian exile. Persia was on the rise and the conquest of Babylon was imminent. Despite the possibility of return, the exiled Jews lived in a city not their own, and among a strange people.

In this new environment, Jews faced a crisis of faith. What sort of God did they worship? Before the exile, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was only one God among many, but he was the only God that mattered for the Jews. Now, Jews, as a minority in a foreign city, had to face strange gods head on. Their response was simple. There was the only God. All other gods were not only false. They really didn't exist. Many scholars believe this answer was the birth of Jewish monotheism.

But, this view also gave the Jews a new responsibility. They had the duty to "enlighten" the nations to the true identity and mission of God.

The call of the Servant summed up this new duty. God called his Servant. And, God gave his Servant two commands: 1) gather the Diaspora back to the land of Israel, and 2) be a light to the nations.

Christians believe Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled this call. He was the Servant. Faith in him gathers the faithful together. And makes them like he is, a light to the nations!