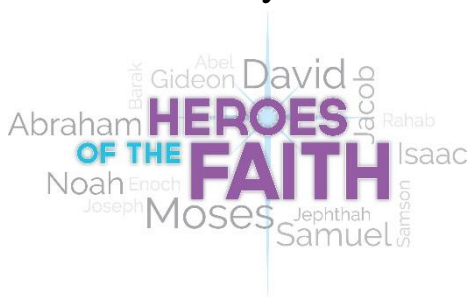




In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Intro

Who are your HEROES of the Faith?



Who are the people who have had an impact on who you are as a Christian?

For Jesus – and certainly for Mark – **John the Baptist** was a Hero of the Faith.

## I. John the Baptist



A. We're at kind of a strange interlude in this morning's Gospel.

1. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus sent out his Disciples among the villages to teach and to heal.

2. And next Sunday, we will hear the results of this first mission trip

3. And right in the middle of this sending out the Disciples and their return, Mark drops this story about the death of **John the Baptist**.

4. So, what's going on here?

B. Although this grisly story might seem like an interruption in the narrative, it fulfills a definite purpose in the overall narrative of Mark's Gospel.

1. Whereas, Luke connects Jesus and John through parallels in their birth stories, Mark connects them by the circumstances of their deaths.

2. Here, **John the Baptist** – even in his death – can be seen foreshadowing Jesus’ crucifixion.

C. As I mentioned before, **John the Baptist**, among other things, was for Jesus and later Mark and the other Gospel writers, a HERO OF THE FAITH.

1. When speaking about **John** to the crowds in both Matthew and Luke, Jesus says:

- *“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?*
- *What did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes?*
- *Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces.*
- *What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.*
- *This is the one about whom it is written,*  
*‘See I am sending my messenger ahead of you,*  
*who will prepare your way before you.’*
- *I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet, the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”*

2. Truly, **John the Baptist** was a HERO of the Faith.

3. And so I’ll ask you once again – Who are YOUR Heroes of the Faith?

## II. Heroes of the Faith

A. When I reflect back on my life – these are some of the people who come to my mind as **my** HEROES of the Faith.

1. I think of **Mrs. Frail** – my third grade Sunday School teacher.

- In her pew every week/**red prayer books**/anyone could sit with her – never got to - my Mom made me sit with her.

- Nothing special – just a little old (to us) lady (50s) who made sure a bunch of 8 year olds knew how the service went on Sunday morning and made sure we participated in it.

- And I still remember her to this day – over 50 years later.

2. Another HERO I think of is my High School and College church choir director – **Jeff Rickard**.

- He taught me a true appreciation for music and liturgy and how to do it right and well.

3. I think too of a Summer Seminarian during that critical year for me between High School and College, **Dean Farrar**.

- He helped me to see that not all priests were OLD MEN – like my Father – and helped to nurture seeds in me that puts me here today.

4. And I think of two priests who were **mentors** to me as I was starting out – **Harry Edwall** for whom I worked in Seminary and who, after he retired, came to hang out with me in Long Beach.

5. And **George McLaren** another mentor who helped me as a new rector at the neighboring church down the road, who always treated me as an equal and worked together with me on many projects.

B. And I look forward to new HEROES OF THE FAITH as I continue to grow in my Spiritual Life and my life with God.

1. I especially think of **Herbert O'Driscoll** who has long been a HERO for me and was part of what made my sabbatical so special as I got to know him personally as he led my **pilgrimage** to Iona.

2. And I think of other new HEROES like **John Philip Newell** whose writings have formed and informed me in Celtic Spirituality.

3. And of course, the list goes on and on and on.

### III. Your Heroes of the Faith

A. And so, I ask you once again – Who are YOUR **Heroes of the Faith**?



1. Who are the people who helped to mold YOU – who shaped you into the person that you are **SPIRITUALLY**?

2. It's something good to reflect on.

- It will take you deep into your life – and may take you a long way back.

3. And then, think about WHO you might be a **Spiritual Hero** for?

4. Whose life have YOU touched in a spiritual way – who have YOU helped to know the love of God in their life?

- Who's life would you like to touch?

B. So I have some **HOMEWORK** for you.

- What! Homework – its summer!

1. But, nonetheless, here it is:

- I'd like you to write a **Spiritual Autobiography** focusing on the significant people in your spiritual life – like I just did.

2. Who are the people who made you who and what you are **spiritually**?

3. Set some time aside and think about it

- and then list those people who have made a difference in your life and helped you to be the Christian that you are today.

4. Ponder too those people for whom you might have been a spiritual example – or perhaps those people for whom you **want** to be a spiritual example.

5. And then, when you have your list – thank God for each person on it – your heroes and others – you might want to thank them individually too,

if you can – but hold them up before God and offer a thank you for what they have meant to you.



6. And then look to the future, and who or what might be continuing to mold your walk with God – as you look to the spiritual person you might become.

Let Us Pray

God our Father,  
you called John the Baptist to be the herald of your Son's birth and death.  
As he gave his life in witness to truth and justice, so may we strive to profess our faith in your Gospel. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen. (on-line)