



Piece: *Virgin and Child Surrounded by Saints* (detail), 1537

Artist: Marco Palmezzano

Location: Vatican Museums

The Time Is Right

Saint Luke loves to be precise in his Gospel, so he documents the exact time and place of the appearance of John the Baptist, the precursor to Jesus. Tiberius was the second emperor of Rome, and the fifteenth year of his reign corresponds to AD 27. Pontius Pilate was prefect from the years 26 to 36. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled in Galilee until his death in the year 39 and is the Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded. On the Jewish side, Caiaphas was high priest, and his influential father-in-law Annas was considered a leader of Jewish religious life.

These historical dates align with Luke's explanation, as well as other events described in his Gospel. Ours is a faith based on real people and events. No doubt there is a great appreciation for the supernatural in our faith, but it is never *against* nature, just *beyond* it.

Jesus praised John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:2-9) for his strong will and dedication. Humility, austerity, courage, and a spirit of prayer are also a large part of the testimony John left us. Palmezzano dresses him in the martyr's red and camel skin to accent his supreme virtue. So dedicated and heroic was he in his fulfillment of the mission entrusted to him, Jesus acclaimed "among those born of women there has been none greater" (Matthew 11:11). "He was a burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35) to illuminate the path toward the true light who was coming into the world. Once that divine light arrived, John receded into the shadows.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection

Do I lead people to Jesus through my dedicated testimony?

Do I speak easily and naturally of Jesus with colleagues, family, or friends?

He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3