

**GOSPEL PEARLS**

## Choosing a name

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*When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened*

*and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbours were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel. (Luke 1: 57-66, 80)*

Elizabeth and Zechariah, after having prayed their whole lives to receive the gift of a child from God, can at last joyfully experience the fulfilment of their desires. Zechariah renounces giving his child a name from his own family. He obeys God, instead. With his wife's consent, Zechariah calls his son John, which means "a gift or grace of God", and "God has fulfilled, the Lord is merciful." St John the Baptist's parents pay witness to giving God credit without taking credit for themselves by virtue of the name they gave to their long-awaited child. May we follow their example in order not to becoming attached to earthly affairs, as Elizabeth and Zechariah could have done by choosing a different name.