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### July 2021 California Supplement

*“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.” -- St. Augustine*

**Dear Friends and Readers:** July is soon at hand; a time of American celebration. John Adams foretold the excitement, imploring Americans to celebrate “with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other.” And so should it be. To each of you, I wish a joyous, peaceful and companionable gathering.

But this message addresses two other notable events, also causes for reflection and inspiration. The first is recently passed, the Festival the St. John the Baptist, celebrated on June 24 and presaging our Savior’s nativity by exactly 6 months. We all remember that our Masonic Lodges are spiritually dedicated “to the Holy Saints John”, the Baptist and the Evangelist. Scripture tells us that John the Baptist was conceived miraculously by Elisabeth, the Virgin Mary’s cousin, even though Elisabeth was barren and had passed child-bearing age. Born of her scriptural union with Divinity, we are told that John was a prophet of the Highest, conceived “to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.” (Luke 1:77).

When Jesus was about 30, John baptized him in the River Jordan. In the story familiar to us all, the Holy Ghost descended as a dove upon Jesus and in that moment, a voice from Heaven said, “Thou art my beloved son; in Thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22). And thus it was that the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ became manifest.

John the Baptist suffered mightily for his faith. He was imprisoned by Herod, beheaded, and his head delivered to Herodias on a platter.

(Matthew 14:3-11). For his steadfast devotion to his Savior, Christians have celebrated his birth since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, as we Christian Masons do today.

In the formative days of the early church following Jesus’s death and resurrection, many were curious about the meaning the wondrous events at Calvary. Christians were then widely persecuted, false prophets abounded and the apostolic eyewitnesses of Jesus’ divinity were aging and often martyred. People wanted to believe in Christ’s promise of salvation but were uncertain about what it meant to act as Christians. Against this backdrop, the Apostle Peter wrote letters to people in the area near the Black Sea, now identified as northern and eastern Turkey. In his two epistles, Saint Peter counseled the regional tribes concerning how to serve God, the suffering it entailed and the reward that was coming [1 Peter], and warned of false teachers claiming to be Christians who were distorting the true message of the church [2 Peter].

I chose several verses from the Second Epistle as my Bible passage because it reveals to me, in the words of the Apostle, what Christianity means and requires. Not that we, most certainly I, satisfy Saint Peter’s testimony but that we endeavor to live our lives to that end.

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;  
 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;  
 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity;  
 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8.)

My wish is that this passage inspires you, as it has me, to become a better person in God.

In Faith, David Studley

**Fear Not: Proclaim and Celebrate our Faith.**