

Homily for the Feast of Birth of John the Baptist

She was told not to do it. She was warned that she would be putting her life in danger. She would hear none of it. Instead she walked onto the battlefield and ministered to the injured and dying. She paid no attention as to which side they were on. In her eyes, they were helpless human beings who needed attention and care. For her courage she was called the “the angel of the battlefield.”

Her name was Clara Barton and through her courage and bravery, she became the founder of the American Red Cross. She was more than willing to put aside the safe conventions of her life for the sake of the principles of justice, compassion and peace. She was a true prophet who proclaimed the way of God not by words but by deeds. Although she never wore a habit, she embodied what is most often found in the lives of women religious in our country and throughout the world who have become living vessels of faith by their willingness to put themselves in harm’s way in order to bring healing, care and compassion to others.

Today the Church celebrates the birth of John the Baptist. Today we celebrate John, the great prophet, who bridged the Old and the New Testaments. John was the one who testified to the light of God’s love found in Jesus Christ. In order to witness, John refused to be silenced

or limited by the impending dangers of what he did and what he said. For this he paid the prophet's price. He would rather stand up and act than be silent and hidden.

May we who celebrate this feast possess the courage to be prophets of that same "light" of Christ. May we, like John and people like Clara Barton, be prophets by what we do and by what we say. May we never allow darkness, anger, hatred or the opinions and ruling of others to silence us. Rather, may we be like John the Baptist and Clara Barton who are for us shining examples of how we live our lives by acting on our faith and unafraid to witness to God's love.