

# Narrative Convergence in the Encounters of Jesus and John

POTENTIAL APOCRYPHAL SOURCES FOR LEONARDO'S *VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS*

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**Abstract**

This paper examines seven apocryphal and hagiographical texts that shaped theological understandings of John the Baptist's early encounters with Jesus, providing critical background for Leonardo da Vinci's enigmatic *Virgin of the Rocks* (1483). Although Leonardo's precise textual sources remain elusive, scholars recognize the painting primarily as a depiction of an imagined childhood meeting between Jesus and John, a scenario absent from canonical scripture but richly developed within medieval devotional literature. Contrary to persistent misconceptions, no textual tradition explicitly describes such a meeting occurring during the Flight into Egypt. Instead, this study highlights three distinct narrative moments consistently present in these textual traditions: the Visitation (with John sanctified in the womb), the Flight into Egypt (involving parallel journeys but no direct encounter), and the Return from Egypt (in which an explicit meeting occurs near the Jordan River).

Each text discussed in this paper reveals notable intertextual dependencies, building upon earlier works and collectively shaping a coherent yet flexible narrative tradition. Medieval authors freely invented narrative details to enhance theological teachings, resulting in subtle textual variations that artists and theologians could exploit to support or undermine specific doctrinal positions—most notably, the controversial debate over Mary's Immaculate Conception. By 1483, such nuances carried significant theological implications, especially within Florence's Dominican community at San Marco, where Vincenzo Bandello actively contested Franciscan teachings about Mary's purity.

Importantly, this study also addresses the influential interplay between textual and visual traditions. By the time Giorgio Benigno Salviati authored the *Apocalypsis Nova* (1502), Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*, alongside his celebrated *Last Supper*, had achieved widespread acclaim, possibly contributing to Leonardo's recognition throughout Italy as a *maestro dei maestri*. The *Apocalypsis Nova*, therefore, seemingly draws upon the same narrative and visual traditions crystallized two decades earlier by Leonardo's work.

In what follows, the reader is first provided a concise summary of the three key narrative events—Visitation, Flight into Egypt, and Return from Egypt—as represented across the seven selected texts: (1) the *Protoevangelium of James*, (2) Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, (3) Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, (4) Serapion's *Life of John the Baptist*, (5) Domenico Cavalca's *Life of John the Baptist*, (6) Feo Belcari's *John the Baptist in the Desert*, and (7) the *Apocalypsis Nova*. Subsequently, full translations of each text are provided to facilitate detailed analysis, allowing readers themselves to discern both subtle distinctions and meaningful similarities within this rich textual tradition.

**Introduction**

As a Florentine from the city devoted to John the Baptist, Leonardo da Vinci, in creating his enigmatic *Virgin of the Rocks* in 1483, profoundly engaged with the rich and intricate theological traditions surrounding the life and significance of Florence's patron saint. Although the exact textual sources Leonardo may have drawn upon remain elusive, scholars generally interpret the painting primary 'theme' as depicting a meeting between the infants Jesus and John—an event not found explicitly within canonical Gospels, which offer no account of such an encounter during Christ's infancy or during the Holy Family's stay in Egypt. Despite persistent misconceptions suggesting Leonardo explicitly depicted an apocryphal encounter between Jesus and John during the "Flight into Egypt," no known textual source definitively supports this claim. Instead, careful examination of the broader apocryphal and hagiographical (non-canonical) literature circulating in the mid-to-late fifteenth century reveals a diverse and intricate tapestry of narratives, each describing similar yet distinct encounters between the young Jesus and John the Baptist. These varied traditions were likely synthesized in the hagiographical imagination of the period, collectively shaping the interpretive context within which Leonardo crafted his painting.

This paper introduces and analyzes seven prominent textual sources—encompassing apocryphal gospels, devotional narratives, and hagiographical legends—six of which circulated before Leonardo began his *Virgin of the Rocks* (c. 1483), and one appearing almost 20 years later (c. 1502). Each text addresses three potential scenarios in which Jesus and John the Baptist could have met during their early lives: (1) the Visitation, explicitly recorded both canonically in the Gospel of Luke and in non-canonical literature, describing their first 'encounter' while still within their mothers' wombs (the "type foetus" motif); (2) the Flight into Egypt, described in canonical and non-canonical sources, which separately narrate the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt before John and Elizabeth flee to the wilderness following Herod's persecution. Notably, no textual source explicitly describes Jesus and John meeting during this flight, though some Leonardo scholars repeat this misinformation; and (3) the Holy Family's return from Egypt, recorded in canonical and non-canonical sources, however the non-canonical explicitly portray Jesus and John, each around seven years old, meeting in the wilderness near the Jordan River. These varied texts—composed at different times by diverse authors—exhibit significant thematic continuities alongside meaningful divergences, highlighting the evolving, fluid, and richly complex nature of late medieval devotional storytelling.

Indeed, the seven texts discussed in this paper reveal some notable intertextual dependencies, with later narratives building upon earlier traditions. Such interdependence indicates the emergence of a widely recognized textual and theological "iconography," a kind of shared vocabulary of motifs, symbols, and

narrative structures about the life of John the Baptist that was firmly established by the mid-late fifteenth century. The similarities between these texts—the repeated emphasis on John's joyful leaping and his implied sanctification in the womb, the prophetic anticipation of Christ's baptism, and the symbolic association of the Jordan with spiritual purification—illustrate an evolving yet coherent narrative tradition especially suited to artists and poets. The willingness of medieval theologians and hagiographers to freely compose imaginative, extra-biblical narratives indicates a mindset far removed from the strict biblical literalism characteristic of later "Sola Scriptura" Protestant movements. Instead, these authors comfortably filled narrative gaps, creatively elaborating upon scriptural foundations to vividly illustrate theological truths. For them, hagiography was akin to painting theological imagery onto the textual canvas, illuminating deeper spiritual meanings rather than strictly adhering to biblical exactitude. Therefore, important are the subtle distinctions between each narrative. As each text appeared, authors added new layers of symbolic meaning, refined theological interpretations, or subtly adjusted narrative details to align with doctrinal perspectives prominent within their own communities. By the late fifteenth century, these subtle textual variances provided artists and theologians with iconographic tools that could be employed either to promote or to subtly undermine positions in the ongoing controversy surrounding Mary's Immaculate Conception—especially within Franciscan and Dominican intellectual circles. Certain texts notably emphasized the idea that Mary and John had been sanctified in the womb, framing sanctification itself, rather than immaculate purity from the moment of conception, as the true indicator of exceptional holiness. By 1483 these distinctions would have carried potent theological implications, particularly in Lorenzo de' Medici's Florence, where the Dominican community at San Marco, under the guidance of figures such as Vincenzo Bandello, vigorously debated and resisted Franciscan-supported teachings concerning Mary's immaculate purity.

This complex textual and theological environment is critical for understanding Leonardo's potential sources, influences, and broader intellectual context. While the purpose of this paper is not directly to interpret Leonardo's intentions (that is for my forthcoming paper), it does propose that Leonardo—or at least his theological advisors and patrons—would have inevitably drawn upon this rich textual heritage. More provocatively, this paper suggests that Leonardo's painting was itself a sophisticated act of narrative convergence, artistically merging distinct theological traditions into a single unified visual statement. Indeed, Leonardo seems to draw upon motifs present in multiple texts simultaneously, suggesting an awareness not of isolated narratives but of the broader hagiographical landscape they collectively formed.

Significantly, the narrative traditions outlined here did not end with Leonardo's work; instead, they continued to evolve even after the *Virgin of the Rocks* was completed. A notable example is the *Apocalypsis*

*Nova* (1502), composed nearly two decades after Leonardo painted the original panel. Remarkably, this text, authored well after Leonardo's composition, draws on themes nearly identical to those found within Leonardo's visual composition. On its surface, this convergence of themes might suggest that Leonardo drew from the *Apocalypsis Nova*, yet chronologically such influence is impossible. Instead, by the time the *Apocalypsis Nova* was composed in 1502, Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* had already achieved considerable popularity and acclaim. Indeed, alongside his celebrated *Last Supper*, this painting may well have contributed significantly to Leonardo's reputation across Italy as a true *maestro dei maestri*. Given its renown, it is entirely plausible—even likely—that the author of the *Apocalypsis Nova (Giorgio Benigno Salviati)* was directly aware of Leonardo's composition or had personally encountered one of its early copies. Rather than inventing new narrative elements, the author seems to have drawn upon the same rich hagiographical tradition already firmly embedded within the religious imagination of his day—a tradition visually crystallized two decades earlier in Leonardo's influential work. Thus, Leonardo's painting not only synthesized and artistically interpreted preceding textual traditions but may have subsequently influenced later written works, underscoring the dynamic interplay and mutual enrichment between visual and literary cultures in Renaissance devotion.

The English translation of the seven texts presented in this paper therefore provide foundational context for any deeper exploration of Leonardo's complex theological symbolism, demonstrating how artists and authors alike both contributed to and drew from a shared repository of theological imagery and narrative symbolism. By examining these interwoven textual traditions, this study seeks to illuminate the broader devotional, theological, and artistic environment within which Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* emerged and flourished. Thus, the texts analyzed in the pages that follow are first presented through a brief summary outlining the three key narrative events—the Visitation, the Flight into Egypt, and the Return from Egypt—in each of the seven texts. Following this overview, complete samples of each text are provided for a deeper and more detailed analysis. These texts are: (1) the *Protoevangelium of James*, (2) Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, (3) Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, (4) Serapion's *Life of John the Baptist*, (5) Domenico Cavalca's *Life of John the Baptist*, (6) Feo Belcari's *John the Baptist in the Desert*, and (7) the *Apocalypsis Nova*. It is left to the reader to explore and determine both the significant similarities and subtle differences among these rich textual traditions.

# Non-Canonical Summaries

**1) The Protoevangelium of James - (late 2nd century)**
**2) The Life of John the Baptist, (Pseudo) Serapion - (mid-14th century)**
**3) Life of John the Baptist, Domenico Cavalca - (mid-14th century)**
**4) Mediations on the Life of Christ, (Pseudo) Bonaventure - (early 14th century)**
**5) The Golden Legend, Jacobus de Voragine - (early 14th century)**
**6) The Apocalypsis Nova, (Pseudo) Amadeo da Silva – (early 16th century)**
**7) Life of John the Baptist in the Desert, Feo Belcari – (mid-15th century)**

### Protoevangelium of James

Visitation - Mary visits Elizabeth and John leaps in the womb.

Flight - Elizabeth flees to hill-country with John where the mountain splits open as a refuge and an angel abides with them.

Return - No flight to, or return from, Egypt is mentioned.

### Serapion, Life of John the Baptist

Visitation - Elizabeth greets Mary, who is described as a turtle dove, with a kiss. This event coincides with John's leap in the womb, described as his baptism by Christ (the Word), and with the mystical appearance of David between John and Jesus, who quotes Psalm 85: "righteousness and peace have kissed." John is described as wanting to come out of the womb to see Jesus.

Flight - Joseph is commanded by an angel to flee to Egypt and remain there until further notice. Elizabeth knows of their departure and wants to flee. Gabriel then gives Zechariah John's scapular and leather belt, and Zechariah commands Elizabeth to flee by herself into the wilderness with John (who is two and a half). Elizabeth travels with Gabriel and John, claiming that the kiss she received from Mary keeps her fearless in the wilderness, for through that kiss she heard John and Jesus 'kissing' each other in the womb.

Return - When John is seven and a half, Elizabeth dies in the wilderness. Jesus, still in Egypt, aware of John's solitude and sadness in the mountains, travels upon a cloud with Mary and Salome to comfort John. Upon arrival, Jesus and Mary kiss John, while Salome washes the body of Elizabeth. The angels Michael and Gabriel arrive to dig her grave and bury her body, while the 'souls' of the dead Zechariah and Simeon, who recently arrived, chant hymns before departing. Jesus and Mary (and presumably Gabriel) stay with John for seven more days, teaching him how to get by in the desert. Upon departing, they charge Gabriel to stay and watch over John.

**Domenico Cavalca, Life of John the Baptist**

Visitation – A statement that because the Church celebrate the Nativity of John, John must therefore have been made holy (sanctified) in the womb. Mary leaves for the mountains to visit Elizibeth who, upon feeling John, as if a prophet, leap in her womb, immediately kneels and kisses Mary. Upon John's birth Mary is the first to touch John and wash him. John delights in the hearing of Mary and Jesus' name as an infant.

Flight - On their way to Egypt, Jesus, Joseph and Mary pass through the same desert and along the same river that John would later live at six or seven years of age.

Return - John leaves for the desert at seven and an angel announces to Joseph to return from Egypt. Passing through this dessert on their way home John and Jesus and family immediately recognize each other and John kisses Jesus' feet. Jesus then lifts John and blesses him, and they embrace. All four of them sit together and share a meal in an oasis where Jesus and John play together.

**Pseudo Bonaventure, Meditations on the Life of Christ**

Visitation - Mary considers herself as 'evil' and only by grace was she herself sanctified in the womb. Mary greets Elizabeth and John became so infused with the Holy Spirit that even Elizabeth was sanctified. Mary delivered John at birth and John loved her so much he delighted in her, more than Elizabeth.

Flight - Jospeh and family flee for Egypt, by way of the desert, in the middle of the night when Jesus is two months old. It takes then two months to get there. There is no mention of John in the desert.

Return - After seven years and angel tells Joseph to return to Israel. Passing through the desert near the Jordan they encounter John. They all shared the food which John was eating. The authors askes the reader to kneel before John and kiss his feet asking for blessing, for he was the first hermit and leader for those who want to live religiously, a virgin, preacher, prophet and martyr.

**Jacob Voragine, The Golden Legend**

Visitation - Mary visits Elizabeth in the hill country and John leapt and danced in his mother's womb as a way to greet Mary and Jesus, symbolizing his own speech, thus beginning his office as Christ's forerunner. St. Bernard is quoted to explain that Mary is full of grace because she was sanctified in the womb, and the announcement from the angel that both she and Elizabeth were pregnant was so that she would understand that John was Jesus' forerunner. John's praiseworthiness is premised upon the gift of sanctification that he received in the womb, which is compared to an 'anointing' by Christ, and John's leaping is compared to his prophetic nature. John's birth, or nativity, is celebrated in the Church because of his sanctification in the womb.

Flight - Jospeh is warned by the angel to flee to Egypt and Mary hid Jesus along the way.

Return - They stayed in Egypt for seven years.

**Apocalypsis Nova**

Visitation - The angel and Mary arrive at Elizabeth's house in the mountains, but only Mary recognizes the angel. Mary greets Elizabeth, saying 'May peace be with you, most worthy mother of the great prophet, voice crying in the wilderness '. Upon embracing Elizabeth, Mary saw Jesus and John looking at each other. John kneels and worships Christ with a song asking for His blessing. Jesus, then sits down and raises his right hand toward John and blesses him with a song. John then gets up and dances, singing "From my mother's womb the Lord called me by my name.... I will

show the Lamb of God…." Elizabeth heard Jesus call John by his name, therefore Elizabeth decided to call her child John.

Flight - Jospeh flees to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, and along the way Jesus performed miracles.

Return - After Herod dies an angel appears to Joseph and tells him to return to Judea.

**Feo Belcari, John the Baptist in the Desert**

Visitation – No record.

Flight – (v 1 – 17) At a young age (maybe seven ?), John leaves for the desert and begins preaching. No mention is made of Herod.

Return – (v 18 -41) The Holy family leaves Egypt. Jesus, separating himself from his parents, meets John in the desert who kneels before Him and then rises. They begin a lengthy dialogue and John states that he first turned to Christ in the womb and then Jesus tells John of his future mission and how He will be baptized by him and ultimately crucified. As Jesus leaves, John kneels to Mary and 'reintroduces' himself. Mary and Joseph embrace John and Mary speaks to John.

# Non-Canonical Full Excerpts

**1) The Protoevangelium of James**

**2) The Life of John the Baptist, (Pseudo) Serapion**

**3) Life of John the Baptist, Domenico Cavalca**

**4) Mediations on the Life of Christ, (Pseudo) Bonaventure**

**5) The Golden Legend, Jacobus de Voragine**

**6) The Apocalypsis Nova, (Pseudo) Amadeo da Silva**

**7) Life of John the Baptist in the Desert, Feo Belcari**

## Protoevangelium of James

**Visitation:** And when Elizabeth heard her, she threw away the scarlet, and ran to the door, and opened it; and seeing Mary, she blessed her, and said: Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, that which is in me leaped and blessed you.

**Flight to Egypt:** And Elizabeth, having heard that they were searching for John, took him and went up into the hill-country, and kept looking where to conceal him. And there was no place of concealment. And Elizabeth, groaning with a loud voice, says: O mountain of God, receive mother and child. And immediately the mountain was cleft, and received her. And a light shone about them, for an angel of the Lord was with them, watching over them. Note: The Protoevangelium does not have any account of Jesus' flight to Egypt.

**Return from Egypt:** There is no description of the return from Egypt.

## Serapion (Life of John the Baptist)

**Visitation:** At that time, Mary set out and hurried to a Judean town in the hill country. She entered the house of Zechariah and she greeted Elizabeth, who came out to meet her with joy and jubilation and greeted Mary with the words, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." The pure holy Virgin kissed the Word's true turtle dove and the Word baptized John while he was still in his

mother's womb. David appeared between them and said, "Mercy and justice have met and righteousness and peace have embraced [kissed]." And John moved in his mother's womb as if he wanted to come out to see his Lord. After they finished greeting each other, the Virgin stayed with Elizabeth for three months until Elizabeth was about to give birth, at which time she left and went home.

**Flight to Egypt**: An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said to him, "Get up, take the baby and his mother, go to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you." Herod did search for the Master in order to kill him, but did not find him, so he started killing all children in Bethlehem. Elisabeth feared that her son might be killed as well, so she took him and went to see Zechariah in the temple and she said to him, "My lord, come, let us go with our son John to some other land, lest Herod the unbeliever kills him because of Jesus the Messiah. Mary and Joseph already left for Egypt. Come, before they kill our son John and turn our joy into grief." Zechariah answered, "I cannot leave the service of the temple of the Lord and go to a foreign country where they worship idols." She said to him, "What should I do to save my little boy?" The old man replied, "Rise and go to the wilderness near 'Ayn Kārime and if it pleases God, you will save your son…. [then] Zechariah took John to the temple and blessed him, asking God to save him. Suddenly, Gabriel commander of the angels came down to him from heaven, holding a scapular and a leather belt, and said, "Zechariah, take these and put them on your son. God sent them from heaven, this scapular that belonged to Elijah and this belt worn by Elisha." Holy Zechariah took them from the angel and prayed over them before putting them on his son, attaching them to his clothing which was made of camel's hair. He brought him to his mother and said to her, "Take him and go with him to the wilderness, for the hand of the Lord is with him. I have learned from God that he will live in the wilderness until the day he shows himself to Israel…. … Tell me, blessed Elizabeth, what did you rely on, for the evangelist testifies that you grew old without having children, yet now you have been breastfeeding this child for three years. Listen to the answer the blessed Elizabeth gave. She said, "Why are you astonished that I would go alone into the wilderness? I am not afraid of anything, because I have one of God's kin in my arms; and Gabriel travels with me and paves the way before me." She said, "I rely on the kiss I received from Mary, mother of the Lord, because as I greeted her, the baby in my womb leaped with joy and jubilation and I heard both of them kissing each other in our wombs."……

**Return from Egypt:** After five years, the blessed and pious venerable Elizabeth passed away. Holy John sat down to cry over her because he did not know how to shroud her or how to bury her, as he was only seven years and six months old. Herod also died the same day blessed Elizabeth passed away. Lord Jesus, whose eyes see heaven and earth, saw his relative John sitting next to his mother crying. He also started crying and cried for a long time, but no one knew why. When Jesus' mother saw him crying, she said to him, "My

son, what happened, why are you crying? Did Joseph or somebody else make you upset?" The mouth filled with life said to her, "No, mother, it is your relative, the venerable Elizabeth. She left my beloved John an orphan and he is now crying over her body which is lying in the mountains."

When the Virgin heard this, she started crying for her relative, but Jesus said, "Do not cry, my virgin mother, for you will see her with your own eyes this very hour." And as he was talking to his mother, suddenly a cloud filled with light appeared and landed between them. Jesus said, "Get Salome, we will take her with us," and they mounted the cloud and it flew with them to the wilderness near ʿAyn Kārim, to the place where the body of blessed Elizabeth was together with holy John. The Savior said to the cloud, "Set us down here" and immediately the cloud stopped and descended to earth. The sound it made reached the ears of blessed John who became afraid, left the body of his mother, and ran. Immediately a voice reached him which said, "Do not be scared, John, my beloved. It is me, Jesus your Lord, Jesus your relative. I have come to you with my beloved mother to fulfill the command of your happy mother Elizabeth because she is a relative of my mother." When he heard this, the blessed John turned back and the Messiah and his mother both kissed him. The Savior said to his virgin mother, "You and Salome, come and wash her body." So they washed the body of blessed Elizabeth in the spring from which she and her son used to draw water. The pure Virgin Mary held the Blessed One, cried with him and cursed Herod for the many evils he had committed. Suddenly, Michael and Gabriel came down from heaven and dug a grave. The Savior said to them, "Go and bring the soul of Zechariah and the soul of Simeon the priest so that they will chant hymns while you bury her body." Michael brought the souls of Zechariah and Simeon and they buried Elizabeth's body and sang over it for a long time while Jesus' mother and Salome cried. The priests then made a sign of the cross and prayed over her three times before laying her to rest. Then they sealed the grave with the sign of the cross and went back to where they came from in peace. Jesus and his mother then sat down next to the blessed John and consoled him for seven days because of his mother. They also taught him how to get by in the desert. And the blessed Elizabeth passed away on the 15th day of the month Amšīrn (Ševat). Jesus said to his mother, "Come, let us go to a place where I can complete my mission." But the Virgin cried because John was all alone and still a small child. And Mary said, "Son, let us take him with us, he is an orphan and has no one." Jesus said to her, "This is not the will of my Father in Heaven. He will stay in the wilderness until the day he shows himself to Israel. Instead of wild beasts, he will find a wilderness filled with multitudes of angels and prophets. I have ordered Gabriel the commander of angels to watch over him and give him the power of Heaven. I will also make the water in this spring sweet as his mother's milk.

**Domenico Cavalca (Life of John the Baptist)**

**The Visitation:** [The Feast of Johns Nativity] teaches us that he was holy even in his mother's womb, so I believe his entire life thereafter must have been holy. No record exists that speaks otherwise about him—only holiness—so it seems particularly fitting to contemplate his holiness, both small and great, especially for those who have not reached higher spiritual perfection.... Six months into Elizabeth's pregnancy, the Annunciation occurred, when the angel told Our Lady that her cousin Elizabeth was six months pregnant. Our Lady, according to God's will, immediately rose to visit her cousin, traveling to the mountains, presumably accompanied honorably. When she arrived, a servant informed Elizabeth, who, upon meeting her, felt the child leap joyfully in her womb, as John felt the spirit of prophecy, prompting Elizabeth to kneel, kiss her, and exclaim, "Whence comes this grace that the Mother of my Lord visits me?" Our Lady replied with her Magnificat.... . Together, these holy individuals shared heavenly joy, feeling as though they were in paradise itself, discussing God's mercy toward humanity, the saints in Limbo, and prophecies concerning the two children they carried.... The household, filled with angels, resembled paradise. Elizabeth gave birth joyfully, insisting Our Lady assist her first. Upon birth, Our Lady wrapped the newborn John in a white cloth, washed him, and presented him to Zechariah, who joyfully blessed God. Elizabeth breastfed John, blessing him in the name of Jesus.... His parents marveled at his holiness, instructing him in Scripture, prayers, and hymns. John showed profound delight in hearing of Jesus and Mary, even as a small child.....

**Flight to Egypt:** The Book of the Life of Christ says that behind this desert and beyond the Jordan River, through this desert, our Lady and Joseph passed with the child Jesus when they fled to Egypt. It also says that John the Baptist went there when he was about six or seven years old, to live penitently, and that was his first departure. Therefore, behold that from this desert and along this river our Lady and Joseph passed with the child Jesus, traveling to Egypt.

**Return from Egypt:** Thus, John the Baptist went to live penitently in this desert at six or seven years old, and this was his first departure.... Now, when John was in the desert, that is, around the time he went there, behold, the angel went to Egypt to announce to Joseph, who was there, to return with the Mother and the Child, as those who sought the Child's life in Judea were dead. And blessed Joseph came by land toward Judea, taking the Mother and the Child, traveling a long road. Passing near this desert, as they passed near where John the Baptist was, immediately John came from afar, inspired by God, to see the Mother and Child; and they recognized each other immediately, and instantly John began to run toward them. The Child Jesus likewise ran toward him, and John threw himself entirely on the ground to kiss the

feet of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus put His foot on John's bowed head, and raised him immediately, and then gave him peace, saying: "Peace be with you," and they embraced each other sweetly. John reverently said: *Deo gratias*.... After these greetings, they sat together, all four of them, and John approached Jesus and the Mother as closely as possible; and the Mother of Jesus began to say to John: "My son, how are Zacharias and my dear sister, Madame Elizabeth?" And the child replied: "Lady, they love God well, but I have not seen them since I came into this desert."... [then] they came to a very beautiful meadow, which John had visited several times to rest, where there were many beautiful, large juniper trees and other small trees, and high above was a beautiful spring of water. And it seems to me that in this desert, having these things, it is the most beautiful spot there could be. And if there had been any more beautiful spot in the region, as said in the *Vita Patrum*, John would have found it... and Our Lady and Joseph rejoiced greatly, seeing these two little boys together and observing them with such joy that it cannot be expressed in words; and they sat down together to eat, all four of them.... And John, as it pleased him, began to speak sweetly of God, and Master Jesus replied sweetly, in such a way that Joseph and Our Lady remained in deep admiration, hearing them speak of such high and noble things.

**Pseudo Bonaventure (Mediations on the Life of Christ)**

**Visitation:** Upon this, I, the author and servant of Christ, asked her [Mary], "My gentle Lady, were you not full of grace and all virtues?" And the Blessed Virgin replied, "Truly you must know that I considered myself as bad and evil and unworthy of the grace of God as you, but I prayed for mercy and virtue. You, beloved, also believe that I had every grace with no effort, but this is not so; in fact, I must say that I never received a favor or gift or virtue without great endeavor and constant prayer, ardent desire and profound devotion, with many tears and hardships, saying, doing, and thinking only things to please Him as best I could, except for the grace of sanctification with which I was blessed in my mother's womb." And she added, "Truly you must know that grace does not descend to the soul except by prayer and corporal affliction.....  and when our Lady recalled the words of the angel about her cousin Elizabeth, she decided to visit her....  As she entered the house she greeted Elizabeth and said, “God be with you, my sister.” Full of joy and happiness and animated by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth rose and embraced her tenderly and cried in exultation, “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is it that the mother of our Lord comes to me?” (Luke i, 42-43). That is, when the Virgin greeted Elizabeth, John, in the womb, became so imbued with the Holy Spirit that he communicated it to his mother, who had not felt it before. The abundance of grace in the child also filled the mother, for the Holy Spirit did not act on her

soul even though something in her deserved sanctification. In John, the grace of the Holy Spirit was stronger than in the mother, therefore she heard Mary but he felt the Advent of the Lord and exulted, causing her to speak a prophecy.... When her time had come Elizabeth gave birth to the son whom our Lady lifted from the ground and diligently cared for as was necessary. The child loved her deeply, as though he understood her, and even when she gave him to his mother he turned his face to the Lady, delighting only in her.

**Flight to Egypt:** Since the plan of the Lord was not yet known to them on their return to Nazareth, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph to say that the Boy and His mother should flee to Egypt, for Herod was preparing to take the life of the Child. Thus they started toward Egypt during the night. Consider and meditate on what is said above and written below, how they lift the sleeping boy Jesus, and have pity on them. .... It was a great tribulation for the mother and Joseph to see the Child demanded and hunted to be killed. What more serious thing could they have heard?... It was also grievous that they had to go to a distant country of which they knew nothing, by rugged roads which were difficult for our Lady on account of her youth and for Joseph because of his age, and also because of the sweet Infant, not yet two months old, whom they had to carry. They had to wander in a strange land, poor, having almost nothing..... Thus the Lord fled before the face of His servant, or rather the servant of the devil. He was carried to Egypt by the very young and tender mother and by the aged, saintly Joseph, along wild roads, obscure, rocky, and difficult, through woods and uninhabited places —a very long journey. It is said that couriers would take thirteen or fifteen days; for them it was perhaps two months or longer They are also said to have gone by way of the desert, which the children of Israel traversed and in which they stayed forty years..... When they entered Egypt all the idols of that province fell and broke, as was prophesied by Isaiah.

**Return from Egypt:** When the seven years of the Lord's journey in Egypt were over, the angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying, "Take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those are dead who sought the life of the Child" (Matt. ii, 20). And he took the Child and His mother and returned to the land of Israel. How will the child Jesus, still a tender boy, return? Their return appears to me more irksome than when they came to Egypt, for then He was so small that He could be carried. Now He is too big to be easily carried and yet too young to travel on His feet.... Thus they go, passing through the desert by which they had come. On that journey you will often pity them who have little rest, and see them weary and tired, by day as well as by night. When they came close to the edge of the desert they found John the Baptist, who had already begun to do penance there, although he had not committed any sin. It is said that the site on the Jordan where John baptized is the same place where the children of Israel crossed when they came from Egypt through the desert, and that near this spot in that desert John did penance. Thus it

is likely that the boy Jesus, passing it on His return, found him there. Meditate on how he received them joyfully and how, resting a little, they ate with John those raw foods that he usually ate. Finally, after enjoying great refreshment of the spirit together, they bade farewell to him. You, therefore, on greeting him and on departing, kneel before John to kiss his feet, ask for his blessing, and commend yourself to him. This boy was very excellent and marvelous, for he was the first hermit and the leader and path for those who wish to live religiously. He was a most pure virgin, a great preacher, more than a prophet, and also a glorious martyr. Then, crossing the Jordan, they came to the house of Elizabeth, where they rejoiced greatly together.

**The Golden Legend**

**Visitation: (From Chapter 51, The Annuciation)** Then Mary arose and went into the hill country to Elizabeth, and John leapt in his mother's womb as a way of greeting the Virgin. The *Gloss* notes: "Because he could not give greeting with his tongue, he leapt for joy of spirit and so began to fulfill his office as Christ's forerunner." Mary attended Elizabeth for three months until John was born, and lifted him from the earth with her own hands, as we read in the Book *of the Just*.... ... Mary is called full *of grace,* as Bernard says, because four kinds of grace shone in her spirit: the devotion of her humility, the reverence of her modesty, the greatness of her faith, and the martyrdom of her heart. She is told. *The Lord is with thee,* because four things, as the same Bernard says, shone upon her from heaven, these being **Mary's sanctification**, the angel's salutation, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, and the incarnation of the Son of God..... (**From Chapter 86, Birth of John the Baptist):** In Elizabeth's sixth month, Mary, who had already conceived, came to her, the fruitful virgin to the woman relieved of sterility, feeling sympathy for her in her old age. When she greeted her cousin, blessed John, already filled with the Holy Spirit, sensed the Son of God coming to him and leapt for joy in his mother's womb, and danced, saluting by his movements the one he could not greet with his voice. He leapt as one wishing to greet his Lord and to stand up in his presence. The Blessed Virgin stayed with her cousin for three months, helping her, and when the child was born, as we read in the *Scholastic History,* she lifted it from the earth with her holy hands, kindly acting as a nursemaid would..... John's praiseworthiness derives, secondly, from his miracles. Some of these took place before he was conceived in the womb, namely, the announcement of his birth by an angel, the imposition of his name, and his father's loss of voice. Some were related to his conception in the womb, namely, the supernatural conception itself, and **his sanctification and the fulfillment of the gift of prophecy in the womb**.... Fourthly, John's praiseworthiness is founded on the gifts God gave him

in his office. He was gifted while he was still in the womb, when he emerged from the womb, in his life in the world, and in his departure from the world. In his mother's womb he had the wondrous gift of a threefold grace. First came the grace by which he was made holy in the womb, so that he was sanctified before he was born; Jeremiah (1:4ft): “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I sanctified you.” Second was the grace by which he was made worthy to prophesy, as when by leaping in his mother's womb he recognized the presence of God. Chrysostom, in order to show in what ways John was more than a prophet, says: “It befits a prophet to receive the gift of prophecy for the merit of his way of life and his faith. Did it befit a prophet to be a prophet before he was a man?" Moreover, the custom was to anoint prophets, and when the Blessed Virgin greeted Elizabeth, Christ anointed John as prophet in the womb, according to what Chrysostom says: "Therefore Christ made Mary salute Elizabeth, so that the words, proceeding from the womb of his mother where Christ dwelt, would enter through Elizabeth’s ears and go down to John in order to anoint him there as prophet."

Third was the grace that enabled him by his merits to pass on to his mother the spirit of prophecy. Chrysostom, continuing to show how John was more than a prophet, says: "Which of the prophets, by being a prophet, could make someone else a prophet? Elijah, indeed, anointed Elisha as a prophet but did not confer on him the grace of prophesying. John, on the other hand, while still in his mother’s womb, bestowed knowledge of the coming of God into her house upon his mother, and opened her mouth to the word of confession of faith, so that she recognized the dignity of the one whom she did not see in person, saying, 'Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’”

… According to Master William of Auxerre. John’s birth or nativity is celebrated for three reasons. The first is his sanctification in the womb. The second is the dignity of the office to which he was born, for he came as a bearer of light and was the first to announce eternal joy to us…. **(Chapter 156, St. Luke the Evangelist):** So Bernard also, assigning a reason for the angel’s announcing to Mary that Elizabeth had conceived, says: "This announcement was made to Mary so that when it was necessary to teach about the Savior’s coming at one time and the forerunner at another, she, remembering the times and sequence of events, could better disclose the truth to the writers and preachers of the Gospel, since she was fully instructed by heaven about all the mysteries from the beginning."

**Flight into Egypt:** (Chapter 119, The Assumption of the Virgin): Surely she [Mary] served him and ministered to him in every way, carrying him in her womb and bringing him forth to the world, feeding and warming him, putting him to rest in the manger, hiding him on the flight to Egypt, following him from childhood to the cross, never being far from where he was…. (Chapter 10, The Holy Innocents): He [Herod]

thought the Magi had played a low trick on him, and he determined to massacre all the male infants in Bethlehem so that the unknown child of whom he was afraid would be sure to perish. But Joseph was warned by an angel and took the Child and his mother into Egypt, to the city of Hermopolis, where he stayed for seven years, until the death of Herod. And when the Lord came into Egypt, all the idols in the land were destroyed, as had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

**Return from Egypt:** There is no description of the return from Egypt, except for the brief mention (of 7 years) during the episode of the Holy Innocent's, above.

**Apocalypsis Nova (Fifth Rapture)**

**Visitation:** So we arrived at the mountains of Galilee and entered the house of Zechariah. But only Mary saw angels in us. Humbly she greeted, as a humble virgin, Elizabeth, who already had a swollen womb. And as they embraced, a wonderful thing to be said, Mary saw Jesus looking at John and John looking at Jesus. For as soon as Mary, upon entering, said: "May the peace of Christ be with this house" (and to Elizabeth, who was coming to meet her: "May peace be with you, most worthy mother of the great prophet, voice crying in the wilderness"), John immediately turned, face and body, towards Christ, and they looked at each other with the vision of the spirit as blessed souls look at themselves and at God. John first bowed his knees before Jesus, as we angels watched, and worshiped Christ the King. Then, in the language that angels and souls speak to each other, he uttered these words, saying in a chant:

*"Blessed be Christ, true God, my Lord and Savior. Blessed be his advent, through which heavenly food was brought to me. [fl. 94] Bless me, your servant, protect the son of your handmaid, Send blessing from your holy Temple, so that I may be filled with your blessing. Be a strong support for me, so that I may worthily proclaim your praise and glory. I adore you, my God, I surrender myself to you, my Creator."*

But Jesus, as it were, sat down, and with his right hand raised and extended toward John, with these words and in the same language, blessed him in a manner from a song:

*"Blessed are you, John, my chosen servant, you, my worthy precursor and herald.*
*I came so that you could see me, the one whom, shortly after, you were to precede,*
*I came, John, to bless you and show you my face.*

*Be my herald, John, once the mission of precursor has begun.*
*In the desert of the world you will proclaim that I am the Word of the Eternal Father,*
*You will proclaim the Lamb who takes away sin, you will proclaim the Savior of men.*
*You will go before me into the world and prepare my way,*
*You will call men to baptism, you will make known that I am God."*

John, then, while Mary, Elizabeth and we, the angels, were watching, got up and began to jump and dance, saying in a hymn:

*"From my mother's womb the Lord called me by my name,*
*He has appointed me his servant, he has named me his chosen one,*
*He showed me the human appearance and did not hide the divinity from me.*
*I saw the one I had seen already conceived and I worshipped him as*
*God. I received abundant blessings and began my mission as a precursor.*
*I am the herald of the divine Word and precursor of my Lord,*
*I will proclaim the Word of God, I will proclaim the True Word,*
*I will show the Lamb of God, I will enlighten the minds of men."*

These were John's words. His Mother heard, because she 'saw' Jesus call him John. Therefore, when they gave him his father's name, he said: He will not be called after his father at all, but he will be called John. While John was dancing and Christ was blessing him, the mothers embraced one another and, not without inexpressible joy, observed these wonders and spoke to each other in language not of the flesh, but of the angels. And finally, Elizabeth exclaimed with the language of the flesh, repeating the last words of my greeting and blessing the fruit of Mary.

**Flight to Egypt:** Herod heard what was being said [by the Magi] and thought: 'This is the King whom the Magi were looking for.' Many things were announced about him by Simeon and the prophetess Anna. He then published an edict concerning the extermination of children. Joseph fled to Egypt with Mary, and on the way the Child Jesus did many things worthy of admiration, some of which are written among you, such as the tree that bowed down to Mary when she wanted to pick its fruit, and the boy with leprosy who, as soon as he washed in the water bathed by the Child Jesus, was cured, then became a thief and a criminal, and when he was arrested and crucified with the Lord, he believed in him and deserved to hear: 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. Likewise, wherever he went throughout Egypt, Egyptian idols fell....

**Return from Egypt:** Herod died while Jesus, Mary and Joseph remained in Egypt. I then sent an angel to warn Joseph to return to his land because those who sought the life of the Child had died. Joseph did not see angels as often as Mary did, but they often appeared to him in dreams. Jesus, therefore, lived in Nazareth with Joseph, who was considered his father, and with Mary, his real mother.

**Feo Belcari, Life of John the Baptist in the Desert**

***HERE BEGINS THE REPRESENTATION WHEN SAINT JOHN, STILL A CHILD, WAS VISITED IN THE DESERT BY JESUS CHRIST RETURNING FROM EGYPT***

***The Angel announces:***

Greetings be from Him who never errs,
And from the mother, His source of love,
Who wishes to guide hearts toward truth
And to move the sinner by example.
You shall see of Saint John the harsh war,
You will see how he conquered the worldly error,
If you keep your hearts attentive
To fully comprehend everything that happens.

***The Angel announces the representation by saying the following stanzas:***

God took your human form,
Not to rejoice did He come into this world;
Born first in a humble stable,
Poor and naked, he bore the cold.
Let him who has a wise mind
Consider well the great humility our Lord showed,
Staying on the hay between two great beasts suffering,
And thus poor fled to Egypt.

When Herod died, the supreme father
Called His beloved Son back from Egypt;

Jesus, Joseph, and the Virgin mother
Returned with a poor little donkey,
Often pondering the gentle things
Kept in heaven for every elect soul,
And how much the more one suffers pains for God,
The greater good one shall have in Paradise.

Passing through the desert, they came close
To where stood the son of Zechariah,
Who preached often in a loud voice,
Directing each along the righteous path.
To Jesus it was granted by His parents
To find John in that pious work,
This visitation we wish to present,
Thus please listen silently.

***Saint John says to his father and mother:***

**1**

O venerable father Zechariah,
O sweet mother Elizabeth,
I am sent to prepare the way
For Jesus Christ, son of God the Father.
Yet I beg you, willingly grant me leave
To follow virtues noble and swift,
Fleeing the world, dwelling in the desert,
Where man errs less and heaven is closer.

**2**

In the desert there are no flatterers
To invite you to vain words;
There are no sinful companions there,
Nor games nor dances nor worldly festivities;
Instead, there are birds, fruits, and flowers

That teach all minds
To praise God in highest perfection;
Thus grant me your blessing.

***Zechariah responds and says:***

**3**
Sweet child, your tender age
Is not yet strong for so harsh a life;
Yet I see in you such goodness from God
That it will never diminish in this world,
Rather, you will be an example of piety,
Leading the people to conversion,
And surely you'll bear more fruit here
Than living among beasts in the harsh desert.

**4**
We are already old, and we can now
Little extend our remaining life;
Your presence here gives us great comfort,
And it's painful to willingly let you go;
When we have ended our days, you may
Freely follow your chosen path.
As long as we live, content in God,
Do not torment us by departing now.

**5**
And if you're truly sent by the Most High
To prepare the path for the Savior,
And if you must preach to save the people,
You must dwell among the people,
For separating yourself from them
Wouldn't serve the highest Lord;
Think well on this, and choose a path
That your service to God may be acceptable.

***Saint John responds to his father:***

**6**

O dear father, know this for certain,
That having to preach repentance,
I must first experience it myself
In the great desert with my body;
Because words spoken without experience
Would hold little value and meaning;
But when words are proven by deeds,
That's what serves best, dear father.

***Zechariah responds to his son:***

**7**

The great miracles and holy signs
I saw at your birth
Make me believe the Spirit reigns
In your heart with His sentiments,
And that He makes you worthy of this mission;
Thus, for peace, I'll remain content.
With all my heart I pray, O gentle God,
That you bless this son of mine.

***Saint Elizabeth says to Saint John:***

**8**

Much more God's son than mine, O immense Father,
You're not truly mine, beloved son,
Yet still I esteem myself fortunate
That Zechariah is your father;
Although it deeply pains my heart
To see you go, leaving me here,
Blessed are you, my saintly son;
I'm content, though quietly suffering.

***Saint Zechariah and Saint Elizabeth bless Saint John, weeping, and Saint John removes his clothing, puts on a camel-hair garment, returns to his father and mother, gives them his fine clothes, and says:***

**9**

O my dear and beloved parents,
To be outwardly as inwardly I feel,
I remove and leave these garments;
And if ever I've offended, I ask forgiveness,
And pray that you'll be pleased
With what pleases God, sacred and good;
For to save the world, His Messiah
Sends me forth to prepare His path.

***Saint Zechariah responds to Saint John:***

**10**

Dear child, great joy fills
My mind, knowing that God
With justice will mend the world,
Expelling the wicked demon.
Yet sadness also fills
My sensitive soul, seeing
Your tender, naked little body
Preparing itself for such cruel suffering.

**11**

But when I think of Him who sends you,
My sadness ceases, and I am certain
You will be preserved by Him
Both in this world and in the desert.
Your service to Him is dear to Him
Because it's purely offered;
And I pray to Him, by His mercy,
To grant me patience and strength.

***Saint Elizabeth says to Saint John, grieving to see him dressed in such rough garments:***

**12**

I foresaw, O my son, your departure
And though it pains me, I let you go;
But now, seeing you clothed thus
In vile, beastly, harsh apparel,
My heart aches within me, greatly troubled.
Yet I see, and believe that by such a path
You will bring salvation to people
Who stray from the right way.

"Again my heart is deeply wounded,
So much my soul seems to dissolve from my body."

***Saint John to Saint Elizabeth:***

"Mother, I pray that God grants you
Relief from pain and contentment."

***Saint Elizabeth, accepting God's will, says to Saint John:***

**13**

"I cannot, being my son,
Desire your departure in this manner
Without feeling deep sorrow in my heart
That always invites me to tears.
And if I have only this hesitation,
That I would not have my own wishes hinder
The will of God, you would not go;
Yet, if God wills it, I will not hold you back."

***Saint John takes leave of his father, mother, and all those of the household, and before departing to the desert, thanks God for freeing him from the miserable world, and says:***

**14**

"I give you thanks, O supreme eternal God,

Who freed me from this miserable world;
Again I thank you, good father,
Who wish me to serve God wholeheartedly.
And you, my mother, I pray that our good God
May lighten for you this heavy burden;
O parents, O friends, O dear house,
I commend you to God until I return."

***Now Saint John departs, and Saint Zechariah comforts Saint Elizabeth, saying:***

**15**

"My dear, beloved, sweet spouse,
What can you do? Will you resist?
If it pleases God that our son
Always lives in harsh penitence,
We should not divert him for our sake
But be content with His providence,
And consider ourselves happy for this,
And give great praise to God for this gift.

**16**

Shouldn't we greatly glory
That our son is God's messenger?
Shouldn't we greatly console ourselves
Seeing him so young and so wise?
Therefore cease your tears and lamentations,
Attend only to the passage
Of our lives, and reaching the harbor
Where we have true comfort."

***Saint John stands in the desert, and seeing people pass through the wilderness, he loudly calls out to them, saying:***

**17**

"Sinners, quickly do penance,

For the kingdom of heaven approaches you;
Thoroughly cleanse your conscience,
Seeking virtues with greatest zeal,
And soon you'll see the mortal veil removed
By the eternal Word, through His mercy;
Prepare yourselves the way of the Lord,
For our Savior is now in the world."

***Jesus, returning from Egypt and passing through the desert, separates a bit from Joseph and the Virgin Mary, goes to find Saint John, and gently says:***

**18**

"Greetings from God, most mighty John,
You who flee the world for divine love;
How have you consumed your young years
In such harshness from your infancy?
The infernal flesh and evil demons
Make ambushes along your path;
Tell me, I pray, of your life and habits,
How you sustain yourself and by what light."

***Saint John, by the Holy Spirit, recognizes Jesus, and upon seeing him, kneels, then rises and says:***

**19**

Such grace comes from your sweet presence,
That my heart is now entirely joyful;
You are eternal and highest wisdom,
Your beauty casts great splendor upon me;
Surely, through your mercy,
You deign to visit my lowliness,
You still pour forth abundant charity,
Asking after my well-being and salvation.

**20**

From your supreme light came a splendor
When I was yet within my mother's body,
So that even then, Lord, I turned to you,
Loving you more than Zechariah my father;
And to continue this love,
I flee the world and its pleasures,
For the more one loves earthly things,
The more one makes war against God.

**21**

When I suffer hunger, cold, or heat,
I think of the pain of eternal torments;
And to flee them, I keep my heart steadfast,
Bearing patiently all present pains.
With voice and heart, my mind lifted high
To flee idle pleasures full of falls,
Thus, with these holy and gentle temperaments,
I strive to serve and honor you always.

***Jesus says to Saint John:***

**22**

As you first spoke,
I asked of your health and well-being,
So your holy desires might be ever stirred
To grow better always in virtue.
To me, your every thought is clear,
But for your desires to be fulfilled by grace,
Tell me your thoughts, and what you desire
That I, your holy father, may grant you.

***Saint John responds to Jesus Christ and says:***

**23**

I believe you to be the true son of God,
Incarnate to save the world,
As you revealed to my father
Through your angel, joyful Saint Gabriel.
As I came before you, I wish to follow you;
This thought is no small burden to me,
For I don't know if my service
Is pleasing to you, Jesus my lord.

***Jesus responds to Saint John:***

**24**

Whoever seeks to instruct his brother
To leave vice and embrace virtue
Must first himself do what
He teaches others about salvation.
Thus your sermon greatly pleases me,
For your deeds fulfill your words:
Seeing a holy life benefits more
Than hearing bold speech from the sinful.

**25**

I am pleased with what you've done so far;
But to make your deeds effective in the future,
Many will lovingly come to the desert
To hear your words preached;
Preach justice and peace to them,
And of eternal life, how worthy merit
Each shall receive after death,
Thus escaping the gates of hell.

***Jesus continues:***

**26**

Later, as your fame greatly increases,
See that everyone you see comes
To the beautiful river Jordan, seeking health;
Baptize them there with your own hand,
And fervently proclaim aloud
That all should stay away from sin.
You are the prophet of the present time,
And the greatest prophet among the people.

***Saint John responds to Jesus Christ and says:***

**27**

Up to now, I've well understood
What you wish me to preach,
And whomever I find seeking salvation,
I'll gladly baptize with my hands.
Given this is no small burden,
I humbly ask two more things:
How long should I practice baptism,
And what should I inwardly think of it?

***Jesus Christ responds to Saint John and says:***

**28**

I will come to you in my thirtieth year,
And in the Jordan you'll baptize me;
The holy angels will stand before me,
And you will see the Holy Spirit above me.
You shall hear my Father's voice clearly,
Declaring: "This is my beloved Son";
Listen to him, obey him always.

**29**

Then I will go to fast in the desert

For forty days without food or drink;
There, I shall sustain the assaults
Of evil spirits with divine virtue.
Afterward, I'll preach clearly to the people,
Bringing healing and salvation to all.
This, John, is my mission and my path,
Thus, in your preaching, prepare my way.
To surely show my people
How pleasing bodily fasting is to me;
Then I will openly teach them
To abandon vice and embrace virtue;
And to satisfy souls with glory in heaven,
I will give the law of grace on earth.

**30**

I will confirm my sacred doctrine
With the virtue of holy miracles,
To show that I am the great Messiah
Foretold clearly by all the prophets;
True God, true man sent to earth,
To save mankind from eternal sorrow;
I'll suffer hunger, thirst, heat, and frost,
So my elect may rejoice in heaven.

**31**

The scribes, priests, and Pharisees,
Seeing the people follow me,
Will conspire with other Jews,
Seeking to put me to death;
Falsely accusing my sayings,
I'll be betrayed by a disciple.
When they've cruelly tormented me enough,
They'll deliver me by force to Pilate.

**32**

Their dark falsehood and lies
Will cause the Roman governor to sin,
Believing he calms their hard hearts
With pity that moves human hearts;
At the pillar, with great cruelty,
They'll flog my innocent body,
From head to foot, in bloody fashion,
Making my flesh seem that of a leper.

**33**

And unsatisfied with this torture,
They'll crown me with a crown of thorns;

Thinking this will satisfy the people,
Pilate will say: "Here is the man."
Despite all this, for a long while,
The crowd, in loud uproar and cries,
Demands my crucifixion and death,
Shouting loudly: "Crucify Him."

**34**

Then Pilate will issue the sentence
That I be crucified and killed on the cross;
And those wicked men, full of every fault,
Tormented, condemned unjustly,
Will force me to bear on my shoulders
A heavy cross, without comfort.
Naked and afflicted, thus I'll be
Crucified between two thieves.

***Saint John, utterly astonished, stands hearing these words, then weeping and sighing, says:***

**35**

O supreme God, like a thirsty deer,

You've descended to earth for my salvation.
You, great Lord, became a servant
To free me from the war of hell.
You humbled yourself to protect me,
So greatly does love bind and hold you;
Not content to suffer greatly,
You choose to die on the cross for me.

**36**

If with your blood you wish to save the world,
Must you be circumcised from head to foot?
Why endure flogging and mockery?
This amazes me, joyful Lord,
That to lead us to paradise,

You're willing to suffer hellish pains,
Taking upon yourself all our evils.

**37**

This infinite charity of yours
Seems not virtue but holy madness,
For being God, you willingly give your life
For the lost sheep, who wanders far;
My mind grows faint just thinking it,
My whole soul is distressed with grief,
My body feels filled with weakness:
You die thus, seemingly from folly.

**38**

O good master, O my sweet Lord,
Never did I think that in this manner
True God would save the world, as I now hear;
But all my desire is in this point:
To firmly resolve to die for you,

If needed, and bear every pain
With peace, tirelessly, forever.

***Jesus replies to Saint John:***

**39**
After dying in such shame
For human salvation, on the third day
I'll rise again with this true body;
Then I'll ascend to heaven, adored in glory.
Whoever desires to have a strong, sincere heart,
Always should contemplate my pains.
Now, consider well my passion,
And come with me to Joseph and Mary.

***Having said this, Jesus departs, and Saint John sighing looks after Him. Saint John, seeing Our Lady (Virgin Mary), humbly kneels and says:***

**40**
You've returned safely, holy Mother,
I am the son of devout Elizabeth.

***The Virgin Mary says:***

Are you John, whom Zechariah sings of,
Who will be the forerunner of my Messiah?

***Saint John responds****:*

My soul is filled with such grace
That I cannot speak as I would wish;
My parents love God deeply,
And greatly desire to see you.

***Having said this, Our Lady embraces Saint John, as does Joseph, and then the Virgin Mary sweetly says to Saint John:***

**41**

Go forward, ever advancing from virtue to virtue,
Growing always in holy desire;
Make sure your lips are never silent
In preaching every divine mystery;
The day of salvation approaches,
And it will awaken this whole hemisphere,
When your preaching and love
Makes known the coming of my divine Son.