August 29th: Memorial of the Passion of Saint John the Baptist

Gospel text (*Mk* 6:17-29): Herod was the one who had John the Baptist arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him... She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday... He promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison...

The martyrdom of St. John the Baptist (¿what is a martyr?)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, in the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist we focus on Jesus Christ as a model of "martyr". The Baptist gave his life for unswervingly defending the truth about marriage. This is precisely what "martyrdom" is about: to obey the "Lord of Lords", with all its consequences, without yielding to subterfuge.

Since its inception Christianity identified martyrdom with "liturgy" ("recognizing oneself with Christ…") and as a "sacrificial event" ("…with a suffering Christ with love"). Christians in martyrdom are entirely carried into the obedience to Christ, inside the liturgy of the Cross, and so, within the true worship (totally yielding their hearts to the Father). St. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, claimed “I am Christ’s wheat that I may be ground up in such manner as to become good bread unto Christ”.

—O Jesus, grant me the gift of availability to suffer with you. Because "Christian" and "martyr" are equivalent: in the plight of ordinary life I can become the "bread" that communicates the mystery of Christ, being an "offering" for God and for men.