



St. John the Baptist is an oil painting on wood by the artist Leonardo da Vinci. Completed from 1513 to 1516, when the High Renaissance was metamorphosing into Mannerism, it was his last painting. The original size of the work was 22.4" x 22.7". It is now housed at the Musée du Louvre in Paris, France.

The piece depicts St. John the Baptist in isolation. St. John is dressed in pelts, has long curly hair, and is smiling in an enigmatic manner which is reminiscent of Leonardo's famous Mona Lisa. He holds a reed cross in his left hand while his right hand points up toward heaven. It is believed that the cross and skins were added at a later date by another painter.

Some have also argued that St. John's appearance is androgynous or hermaphroditic, a theory that is supported by a sketch by Leonardo known as "The Angel in the Flesh". In this drawing a figure that greatly resembles his John the Baptist shows both a female breast and an erect penis.

The pointing gesture of St. John toward the heavens suggests the importance of salvation through baptism that John the Baptist represents. The work is often quoted by later painters, especially those in the late Renaissance and Mannerist schools. The inclusion of a gesture similar to John's would increase the importance of a work with a religious conceit.