

St John The Baptist

FEBRUARY 24

Findings of the Precious Head of St John

As a child to Elizabeth and Zachariah in their very old age, St John was filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. After his father was martyred in the holy of holies when King Herod sought to kill Jesus, John and his mother fled to the desert where he prepared himself in the wild for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer. He ate honey and locusts and wore a hair shirt. Like an angel, he was dedicated to God.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching on the banks of the Jordan river to the Israelites, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand," foretelling the Messiah who was to shortly come and to prepare to accept the Savior of the world.

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, ²and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.

³Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet."

⁶On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much ⁷that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."
⁹The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹²John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus."

GOSPEL OF ST MATTHEW 14:14,



**“REPENT
for the
KINGDOM
OF GOD
is at hand”**

Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος και Βαπτιστής

First Finding (4th c.) and Second (9th c.)

According to some, it was secretly recovered by Joanna, one of the Myrrhbearing women, and given honorable burial near Jerusalem. There it was found, through a revelation of the Forerunner, by two monks who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the tomb of our Savior (the first finding). Putting the head in a bag, the monks returned home. On the way, they met an indigent potter from Emesa. That night the Forerunner appeared to the poor man and instructed him to make off with the relic. He returned with it to Emesa and immediately began to prosper in his business. Just before he died, he put the holy relic in a chest, which he left to his sister with these instructions: never to open it without instructions from the one hidden inside it; and to pass it on to a pious man beloved of God. Thus the Head of the Baptist passed through many generations, eventually being concealed in a cave near a monastery founded during the reign of Marcian (450-457), whose abbot was the godly Marcellus.

The blessed Forerunner appeared several times to Marcellus, embracing him and once even giving him a pot of honey. The Baptist ordered Marcellus to follow a star which led him to the cave and came to rest in front of a niche in the wall. Marcellus dug there and came upon a marble slab, under which was a large jar containing the precious Head. The holy relic was taken with rejoicing to the cathedral in Emesa, where it worked many wonders. In the reign of Michael III (842-867), it was taken to Constantinople. It was at this translation that the present Feast was instituted.

The version given here is that of St Symeon Metaphrastes. Other sources give substantially different accounts.

The Prologue observes: "It is important and interesting to note that, while he was alive, John did not work a single miracle (Jn 10:41), but to his relics was given the blessed power of working miracles."



" Truly I tell you, among those
born of women there has not risen
anyone greater than John the Baptist "

Gospel of St Matthew 11:11

