

August 29

Beheading of the honorable and glorious Prophet and Forerunner, John the Baptist

(3rd Class)

GREAT VESPERS

[*First Kathisma: Blessed the man...*]

Stichera for John the Baptist (Tone 6)

6. While the birthday of shameless Herod was being celebrated, the oath he had sworn to the lewd dancer was carried out. The head of the Forerunner, cut off by the master of the feast, was offered on a platter to the guests. O hateful banquet, full of crime and impiety! But we bless the Baptist of the Lord, rightly honoring him as the greatest of those born of women.
5. While the birthday of shameless... (*Repeat*)
4. After dancing, the disciple of the wicked devil claimed your head as her reward, O Forerunner! O hateful feast, so full of blood! Would to God that you had never given your oath, O Herod, son of lies, violator of the Law! Having sworn, why did you keep your word? Better for you to have broken your word and to have received life, than to keep it and cut off the head of the Forerunner! But we bless the Baptist of the Lord, rightly honoring him as the greatest of those born of women.
3. After dancing, the disciple of the wicked... (*Repeat*)
2. It was not fitting for you, O Herod, to condemn to death the man who accused you of adultery, for you were spurred on by desire and by a love inspired by the devil. It was not fitting for you to give that precious head to that impious woman because of a promise made for a dance. How could you dare to commit such

a deed? How was the impudent dancer not consumed by the divine fire when she carried it on a platter into the midst of the guests at that banquet? But we bless the Baptist of the Lord, rightly honoring him as the greatest of those born of women.

1. At times Herodias is calm, at times she is troubled in spirit. O treacherous dance, and treachery of drunkenness! The Baptist has his head cut off, and the head of Herod is troubled! Lord, by the prayers of the Forerunner, grant peace to our souls!
- v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

Doxastikon

While the birthday of shameless Herod was being celebrated, the oath he had sworn to the lewd dancer was carried out. The head of the Forerunner, cut off by the master of the feast, was offered on a platter to the guests. O hateful banquet, full of crime and impiety! But we bless the Baptist of the Lord, rightly honoring him as the greatest of those born of women.

- now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Theotokion

Who would not call you blessed? Who would not sing a hymn of praise to the glory of your giving birth without pain or travail, O Virgin most holy? The only-begotten Son Himself, begotten of the Father before all ages, was made flesh out of you in a manner that cannot be explained, O Woman most pure! And for our sake, He who is God by nature assumed the nature of man. He is not divided into two persons. He is understood to have two natures without commixtion or confusion. O noble and blessed woman, intercede with Him that He may have mercy on our souls.

Entrance. "O Joyful Light..." Prokimenon of the day.

READINGS

1) *Isaiah* 40:1-5,9; 41:17-29; 45:8; 48:30-31; 54:1.

Thus says the Lord: Comfort, give comfort to My people, says your God. O priests, speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out in the desert: Prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then all mankind shall see the salvation of God together. Go up onto a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; Cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out. I, the LORD God, have heard the poor of Israel. I will not forsake them. I will open up rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the broad valleys; I will turn the desert into a marshland, and the dry ground into springs of water. Let justice descend, O heavens, like dew from above, like gentle rain let the skies drop it down. Let the earth open and salvation bud forth; let justice also spring up! With shouts of joy proclaim this, make it known; Publish it to the ends of the earth, and say: "The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob. They did not thirst when He led them through dry lands; Water from the rock he set flowing for them; he cleft the rock, and waters welled forth." Raise a glad cry, you barren one who did not bear, break forth in jubilant song, you who were not in labor, For more numerous are the children of the deserted wife than the children of her who has a husband, says the LORD.

2) *Malachi* 3:1-3, 5-7, 12, 29, 17, 22-24

Thus says the Lord: Lo, I am sending My messenger to prepare the way before Me. And suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek. But who will

endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and purifying silver, refining them like gold or like silver. He will draw near to you for judgment, and he will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, those who defraud the hired man of his wages, against those who defraud widows and orphans; those who turn aside the stranger, and those who do not fear Me, says the LORD of hosts. Surely I, the LORD, do not change, nor do you cease to be sons of Jacob. Since the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who sees the distinction between the just and the wicked on the day I take action to save those who love Me. Remember the law of Moses My servant, which I enjoined him on Horeb, the statutes and ordinances for all Israel. Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the LORD comes, the great and terrible day. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of men to their neighbors, lest I come and strike the land with doom. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the Holy God of Israel.

3) *Wisdom 4:7, 16-17, 29-30; 5:1-7*

But the just man, though he die early, shall be at rest. Yes, the just man dead condemns the sinful who live. For they see the death of the wise man and do not understand what the LORD intended for him. For the Lord shall strike the wicked down speechless and prostrate and rock them to their foundations. They shall be utterly laid waste and shall be in grief and their memory shall perish. Fearful shall they come, at the counting up of their sins, and their lawless deeds shall convict them to their face. Then shall the just one with great assurance confront his oppressors who set at

nought his labors. Seeing this, they shall be shaken with dreadful fear, and amazed at the unlooked-for salvation. They shall say among themselves, rueful and groaning through anguish of spirit: "This is he whom once we held as a laughingstock and as a type for mockery, fools that we were! His life we accounted madness, and his death dishonored. See how he is accounted among the sons of God; how his lot is with the saints! We, then, have strayed from the way of truth, and the light of justice did not shine for us, and the sun did not rise for us. We had our fill of the ways of mischief and of ruin; we journeyed through impassable deserts, but the way of the LORD we knew not."

LETE (*Tone 1*)

What shall we call you, O Prophet? Angel, Apostle or Martyr? An Angel, for you lived like the bodiless powers. An Apostle, for you taught the nations. A Martyr, for you were beheaded for Christ. Pray to Him that our souls be granted great mercy.

We celebrate the memorial of the beheading of the Forerunner: his head once gushed forth streams of blood upon the platter. Now it gushes forth rivers of healings upon the whole world.

Today the sacrilegious mother and murderer incites her lewd daughter, born of a sinful union, by her criminal advice, against God and against the greatest of the Prophets. While hateful Herod celebrated his shameful birthday with a banquet, by virtue of the oath he had sworn, she demanded the precious and wondrous head of the divine Preacher. Insanity that it was, out of respect for the word he had given, he delivered over to her the head as her reward for having entertained him with a dance. But the Prophet of the Coming of Christ did not cease to reprove them even after death for their union so unacceptable to God. He rebuked them as he cried out: "It is not right for you to marry adulterously the

wife of your brother Philip!" O murderous birthday! O feast full of blood! But we the faithful, on this day on which the Prophet and Forerunner was beheaded, rejoice and celebrate a feast, robed in white. Let us ask him to intercede before the Trinity that we be delivered from the disgrace of the passions and that our souls be saved.

v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

(Tone 5)

Wishing to escape from the reproaches merited by his unjust conduct, Herod in weakness gave your head to a wicked woman, O Forerunner. But that wretched man did not realize that, when he had it brought in on a platter, he was accusing himself. You are the teacher of true purity and the guide to saving repentance: intercede before Christ, O Baptist, that we be delivered from the shameful passions.

- now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

We the faithful bless you, O Virgin Theotokos; and we glorify you, as is fitting and right, O unshakable city, indestructible bulwark, invincible protectress and refuge for our souls.

APOSTICHA *(Tone 2)*

1. O preacher of repentance, Baptist of the Lord, your head sanctified the earth when it was cut off; you confirmed the clear law of our God for the faithful, and you destroyed wickedness. As you stand before the throne of the King of All, in the presence of Christ, beg Him to have mercy on our souls.

All: The just man shall flourish like the palm tree; like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.

2. O thrice-holy Baptist, John, you were beheaded for the sake of the Law of the Lord. With the boldness of the pure, you reproached the unjust king who had transgressed it. Thus the angelic hosts stand in wonder

at you, and the choirs of apostles and martyrs glorify you. We venerate your illustrious memory each year, glorifying the Holy Trinity who has crowned you, O blessed Forerunner!

All: The just man is glad in the Lord and takes refuge in Him.

3. Son of the Prophet Zechariah and the greatest of all the Prophets, sanctified from his mother's womb for the service of the Lord, John was beheaded today by an unjust king. His head was a living reproach, both before and after execution, to the young girl who danced in a lewd manner; and the sinful assembly was cast into confusion. Thus we cry out: "Because of the boldness which you have before God, O Baptist of the Lord, ceaselessly intercede with Him for our souls!"

All: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

Doxastikon (Tone 8)

O Forerunner of the Savior, you urged the king and queen not to commit iniquity; but pleasure in a lawless woman spurred Herod on to behead you. Thus your name is praised from East to West. By the boldness which you possess before the Lord, ceaselessly pray to Him for the salvation of our souls!

- now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Theotokion

O Virgin who knew not carnal union, O you who ineffably carried God in the flesh, O Mother of almighty God, O Woman without stain: accept the prayers of your servants. O you who obtain for all of us the cleansing of sins: accept now our supplications and intercede for the salvation of us all.

TROPARION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (*Tone 2*)

The memory of the just is mentioned with praise. As for you, O Forerunner, the Lord's witness is enough: indeed, you were greater than the prophets since you were found worthy to baptize in the waters the One they could but announce. You have fought for the sake of truth and proclaimed to those in Hades that God who appeared in the flesh has taken away the sins of the world and bestowed His great mercy upon us.

v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

RESURRECTIONAL THEOTOKION (*Tone 2*)

All your mysteries, O Theotokos, are beyond understanding and most glorious! Sealed by purity and preserved by virginity, you have indeed been acknowledged as the Mother who gave birth to the true God. Intercede with Him to save our souls!