

THE 29th DAY OF THE MONTH OF AUGUST
COMMEMORATION OF THE BEHEADING OF JOHN, THE HONORED & GLORIOUS
PROPHET, FORERUNNER & BAPTIZER OF THE LORD
AT LITTLE VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 4 Stichera of the holy forerunner, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: “Joy of the ranks of heaven ...”:

Come, O ye faithful, * let us fervently honor together John, * the forerunner and baptizer of Christ, as is meet; * for as a prophet he foretold things to come, * and as a servant he is a divinely splendid initiate ** of the mysteries of the ineffable wonders of Christ. (Twice)

Without pity the mindless Herod severed thy head * which denounced his most vile conduct; * but Christ, O thrice-blessed one, * the Lord and Creator of all, * the Redeemer of all, hath made thee the head of the Church, ** in that thou didst baptize Him.

The iniquitous Herod, * having audaciously had thy head cut off, * commanded that it be brought on a platter * to the vile Herodias, O all-blessed one. * O dread wonder and most glorious report! ** Yet the Church of Christ doth joyously celebrate thy suffering.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII:

Even though Herod destroyed thee, the preacher of the truth, by murder, O forerunner of the Savior, yet the brilliant lamp of thy mouth shone forth the radiance of the Faith, calling out to those in Hades. Wherefore, pray thou, that our souls find mercy.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone VIII:

O Sovereign Lady, accept the supplications of thy servants, and deliver us from all want and grief.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

Spec. Mel.: “O house of Ephratha ...”:

O blessed one, thou wast shown to be * the greatest among those born of women; * for thou didst baptize * the Master of all, O John, thou prophet, ** preacher and forerunner.

Verse: Precious in the sight of the Lord * is the death of His saints.

When Herodias saw * the iniquitous Herod * in the throes of drunkenness and lust, * she prevailed upon him ** to commit murder.

Verse: In everlasting remembrance shall the righteous be; * he shall not be afraid of evil tidings.

Hymning the supremely divine Trinity, * let us lovingly celebrate * the sacred memory * of the godly John ** the Baptizer of Christ.

Glory ..., Both now ..., in the same melody:

O pure one, * only hope and intercessor for Christians, * with the forerunner * entreat thy Son ** on behalf of thy servants.

Troparion of the holy forerunner, in Tone II:

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise * but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner, * for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets * since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom thou didst proclaim. * Then having endured great suffering for the Truth, * Thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in Hades * the good tidings that God had appeared in the flesh * taking away the sin of the world ** and granting us great mercy.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone II:

All of thy most glorious mysteries are beyond comprehension, * O Theotokos; * for, thy purity sealed and thy virginity intact, * thou art known to be a true Mother, having given birth unto God. ** Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

AT GREAT VESPERS

After the Introductory Psalm, we chant “Blessed is the man ...,” the first antiphon.

On “Lord, I have cried ...” 8 Stichera of the holy forerunner.

The composition of John the Monk, in Tone VI:

While the birthday of the shameless Herod was being celebrated, the oath he swore to the vile dancer was fulfilled; for the head of the forerunner, having been cut off, was borne, like food, upon a platter, to those reclining there. O abominable feast, unholy act, full of murder! Yet, honoring the Baptist as the greatest born of women, we call him blessed, as is meet. (Twice)

The disciple of the most evil devil danced, and received thy head as her reward, O forerunner. O feast full of blood! Better would it have been not to have sworn thine oath, O iniquitous Herod, grandson of lies! For even though thou didst make thy vow, it was not well sworn. Better would it have been to be proved false, than to cut off the head of the forerunner, who spake the truth. Yet, honoring the Baptist as the greatest born of women, we call him blessed, as is meet. (Twice)

It was not fitting, O Herod, to condemn to death the denouncer of thine adultery, for the sake of a satanic love and the burning of cruel fornication. It was not fitting for thee to give his most precious head over to a most iniquitous woman because of a vow haplessly made as a condition for her dancing. O how couldst thou have committed such a murder? How is it that the vile dancer was not utterly consumed when she bore it on a platter in the midst of the feast? Yet, honoring the Baptist as the greatest born of women, we call him blessed, as is meet. (Twice)

Again Herodias rageth insanely, again is she vexed. O what deceitful dancing, what a feast of deception! The Baptist is beheaded, and Herod is troubled. Through the supplications of Thy forerunner, O Lord, grant peace to our souls. (Twice)

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

While the birthday of the shameless Herod was being celebrated, the oath he swore to the vile dancer was fulfilled; for the head of the forerunner, having been cut off, was borne, like food, upon a platter, to those reclining there. O abominable feast, unholy act, full of murder! Yet, honoring the Baptist as the greatest born of women, we call him blessed, as is meet.

Both now ..., in the same Tone:

Who doth not call thee blessed, O most holy Virgin? * Who will not hymn thy most pure birthgiving? * For the only-begotten Son Who hath shone forth timelessly from the Father, * came forth, ineffably incarnate, from thee, O pure one; * By nature he is God, by nature for our sakes, he hath become a man * not divided into two Hypostases, * but known in two natures without commingling. * Him do thou beseech, O pure and most blessed one, ** that our souls find mercy!

Entrance. Prokeimenon of the day. Three Lessons:

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

Thus saith the Lord: Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith the Lord. Speak, ye priests, to the heart of Jerusalem; comfort her, for her humiliation is accomplished, her sin is put away: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double the amount of her sins. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. O thou who bringest glad tidings to Sion, go up on the high mountain; lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem; lift it up, fear not. I, the Lord God, I will hear the poor of Israel and will not forsake them: but I will open rivers on the mountains, and fountains in the midst of plains: I will make the desert - pools of water, and a thirsty land - watercourses. Let the heaven rejoice from above, and let the clouds rain righteousness: let the earth bring forth, and blossom with mercy, and bring forth righteousness likewise. Utter aloud a voice of gladness, and let this be made known, proclaim it to the ends of the earth. Say ye: The Lord hath delivered His servant Jacob. And if they shall thirst, He shall lead them through the desert; He shall bring forth water to them out of the rock. Rejoice, thou barren woman who bearest not; break forth and cry, thou who dost not travail: for more are the children of the desolate than of her who hath a husband.

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF MALACHI

Thus saith the Lord Almighty: Behold, I send forth My messenger, and he shall survey the way before Me: and the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into His temple, even the angel of the covenant, whom ye take pleasure in. Who will abide the day of his coming, or who will withstand at his appearing? For he is coming in as the fire of a furnace and as the herb of those who wash. He shall sit to melt and purify as it were silver, and as it were gold. And he will come to you as a Judge, and will be a swift witness against the wicked, and against the adulteresses, and against those who swear falsely by My name, and against those who keep back the hirelings' wages, and those who oppress the widow, and afflict orphans, and wrest the judgment of the stranger, and fear not Me, saith the Lord Almighty. For I am the Lord your God, and I am not changed. But ye, the sons of Jacob, have perverted My statutes, and have not kept them. Wherefore, return to Me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord Almighty. And all nations shall call you blessed. Understand ye that I am the Lord Who discerneth between the righteous man and the iniquitous on the day whereon I shall preserve those who love Me. Be ye therefore aware and remember the law of Moses My servant, accordingly as I charged him with it in Horeb for all Israel, even the commandments and ordinances. And, behold, I will send to you Elijah the Tishbite, before the great and glorious day of the Lord cometh, who shall turn again the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest I come and smite the earth grievously, saith the Lord Almighty, the holy God of Israel.

A READING FROM THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest. Thus the righteous who is dead shall condemn the ungodly who are living. For they shall see the end of the wise, and shall not understand what God in His counsel hath decreed of him. For the Lord shall cast the ungodly down headlong, that they shall be speechless, and He shall shake them from the foundation; and they shall be utterly laid waste, and be in sorrow; and their memorial shall perish. And when they cast up the account of their sins, they shall come with fear: and their own iniquities shall convict them to their face. Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labors. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves: "This was he whom we held betimes in derision, and as a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot among the saints? Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us. We have been full of the ways of the iniquitous and destruction, and have trodden trackless paths, but the ways of the Lord have we not known."

At the Litiya, these Stichera, the composition of Patriarch Germanus, in Tone I:

What shall we call thee, O prophet? An angel, an apostle, or a martyr? An angel, for thou didst live like one of the incorporeal ones. An apostle, for thou didst teach the nations. A martyr, for thy head was cut off for Christ. Him do thou entreat, that He have mercy upon our souls.

Let us celebrate the memory of the severed head of the forerunner, which poured forth blood upon the platter then, but now poureth forth healings upon the ends of the earth.

Today the mother of murder, committer of iniquitous deeds, hath with murderous counsel moved her depraved daughter to wreak evil upon him who is greater in godly excellence than all the prophets, through her ungodly dancing; for when Herod was feasting in honor of his vile birthday, she arranged to demand by an oath the wondrous head of the herald of God. And the promised gift did the insane one grant her, as a reward for her seductive dancing. Yet the teacher of the mysteries of the advent of Christ did not cease to denounce their union, which was abominable to God, even after his end, but, upbraiding them, cried aloud, saying: "It is not fitting that thou shouldst commit adultery with the wife of Philip thy brother!" O birthday, occasion for the slaying of a prophet! O feast full of blood! But, making ourselves white as snow, let us with pious mind celebrate the beheading of the forerunner, rejoicing as on a propitious day; and let us beseech him to move the Trinity to pity, that God deliver us from the disgrace of the passions and save our souls.

In Tone IV: Herod celebrated an unseemly birthday and an utterly shameless feast; for captivated by lust for a woman and excited by a woman's wantonness, he had the head of the forerunner cut off; but he did not cut out the tongue of the prophet, who denounced his foolishness. Shedding innocent blood, he wished to conceal his iniquitous sin; but he could in nowise stop the voice which calleth all to repentance. And though he made merry amid murder, we lovingly celebrate the blessed slaying of John the Baptist; for he preceded Life into Hades, to proclaim Christ our God, the Orient from on high, the only greatly Merciful One, unto those who sat in the darkness and shadow of death.

Come, O ye people, let us praise the prophet and martyr, the baptizer of the Savior; for, as an angel in the flesh, he denounced Herod, condemning him for committing the most iniquitous fornication. And thanks to iniquitous dancing, his precious head hath been severed, that he might announce in Hades the glad tidings of the resurrection from the dead. And he prayeth earnestly to the Lord, that our souls be saved.

Come, O ye people, let us praise the prophet and martyr, the baptizer of the Savior; for, fleeing, he hath made his abode in the wilderness, eating wild honey and locusts, and denounced the iniquitous king. And he hath comforted our little faith, saying: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Glory ..., the composition of John the Monk, in Tone V:

Herod, thinking to escape denunciation for his iniquitous deeds, though troubled gave thy head to an iniquitous woman, O forerunner; for the wretched one understood not that, in having it borne about on a platter, he was denouncing himself. But as thou art an active teacher of purity and a saving guide to repentance, pray thou, O baptizer of Christ, that He deliver us from the disgrace of the passions.

Both now ..., in Tone V:

Hymn, O hymn ye the Mother of our God, O ye people; for today she surrendereth her most radiant soul into the most pure hands of Him Who becometh incarnate of her without seed. Him doth she unceasingly beseech, that He grant peace and great mercy to the whole world.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera of the holy forerunner, in Tone II:

O John the Baptist, preacher of repentance, when thy head was cut off thou didst sanctify the earth, for thou didst make the law of God clear to the faithful and didst uproot iniquity. And, standing before the throne of Christ the King, entreat Him, that He have mercy upon our souls.

Verse: The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree, * and like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied.

For the sake of the law of the Lord thy head was cut off, O all-holy John. Thou didst denounce the impious king who committed iniquity with vile audacity. Wherefore, the armies of the angels marvel at thee, the choirs of the apostles and martyrs glorify thee, and we honor thine annual commemoration, O all-glorious one, glorifying the Holy Trinity, Who hath crowned thee, O blessed forerunner.

Verse: The righteous man shall be glad in the Lord, * and shall hope in Him.

Today the prophet among the prophets, the greatest of the prophets, who was sanctified to the service of the Lord from his mother's womb, was beheaded by the iniquitous king. And openly denouncing the young woman who danced impiously, both before and after his beheading, he put a host of sins to shame. Wherefore, we cry out: O John the Baptist, as thou hast boldness, pray thou earnestly on behalf of our souls.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII:

O forerunner of the Savior, thou didst reprove the king, that he not commit iniquity. But the disporting of an iniquitous woman caused Herod to cut off thy head. Wherefore, from the rising of the sun, even unto the west, thy name is praised. As thou hast boldness before the Lord, earnestly entreat Him, that our souls be saved.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in the same Tone:

O unwedded Virgin! * thou who ineffably conceived God in the flesh, * Mother of God Most High: * accept the supplications of thy servants, O all-immaculate one, * granting unto all cleansing of transgressions; * and, accepting now our supplications, ** pray thou that we all be saved.

At the blessing of the loaves, the Troparion of the holy forerunner, in Tone II:

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise * but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner, * for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets * since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom thou didst proclaim. * Then having endured great suffering for the Truth, * Thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in Hades * the good tidings that God had appeared in the flesh * taking away the sin of the world ** and granting us great mercy. (Twice)

And "Virgin Theotokos, rejoice", (Once)

But if a vigil is not served, then after the Troparion:

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone II:

All of thy most glorious mysteries are beyond comprehension, * O Theotokos; * for, thy purity sealed and thy virginity intact, * thou art known to be a true Mother, having given birth unto God. ** Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

AT MATINS

On “God is the Lord ...,” the Troparion of holy forerunner, in Tone II:

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise * but the Lord’s testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner, * for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets * since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom thou didst proclaim. * Then having endured great suffering for the Truth, * Thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in Hades * the good tidings that God had appeared in the flesh * taking away the sin of the world ** and granting us great mercy. (Twice)

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone II:

All of thy most glorious mysteries are beyond comprehension, * O Theotokos; * for, thy purity sealed and thy virginity intact, * thou art known to be a true Mother, having given birth unto God. ** Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

After the 1st chanting of the Psalter, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone V:

Spec. Mel.: “The co-beginningless Word ...”:

Assembling, O ye faithful, let us praise together the mediator between the law and grace; for he preached repentance to us and, having boldly and publicly denounced Herod, was beheaded. And dwelling now with the angels, he entreateth Christ, that our souls be saved.

Glory ..., in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast appeared today ...”:

Celebrating thy radiant memory today, we beseech thee, O forerunner: earnestly entreat the Savior and Lord, that He grant forgiveness of sins unto all.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone IV:

O ye faithful, let us bless the Theotokos, * our helper, the fervent aid of those amid misfortune, ** by whom we have been delivered from foreign bondage.

After the 2nd chanting of the Psalter, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone V:

Spec. Mel.: “The co-beginningless Word ...”:

In hymns let us praise John the forerunner, the baptizer of Christ, the prophet who was revealed unto us in his mother’s womb, the luminary who manifestly issued forth unto the world from a barren woman, the victorious spiritual athlete; for he prayeth to the Lord, that our souls find mercy.

Glory ..., in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled ...”:

Now hath the baptizer of the Savior, the adornment of the desert and seal of the prophets, appeared unto us, and maketh glad the thoughts of the faithful with understanding. Wherefore, the forerunner of Christ hath been shown forth, the true witness to His coming. Let us therefore cry out together unto John with spiritual hymns: O prophet, preacher of the truth, pray thou that we be saved.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone IV:

All the choirs of Angels were struck with wonder, O Pure Virgin, * at the awesome mystery of thy conception. * How can the One who doth hold all things in place with only a nod, * now be held in Thine arms as a man? * How can the Eternal accept a beginning? * How can the One who nourishes everything that hath breath by His ineffable goodness, * be suckled at thy breast? * And upon seeing these things, with hymns they glorify thee ** as truly the Mother of God.

After the Polyeleos, this magnification: We magnify thee, O John, thou baptizer of the Savior, and we all honor the severing of thy precious head.

Selected Psalm verses:

A: Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. In His commandments shall he greatly delight.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Alleluia ..., Glory to Thee, O God. (Thrice)

After the Polyeleos, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “Of the piping of the shepherds ...”:

Having denounced Herod for the iniquity of Herodias, O ye faithful, the forerunner, baptizer and angel of the Redeemer of all dieth, beheaded, that he might proclaim with boldness to those in Hades the glad tidings that God would descend thereto, to make death captive. (Twice)

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone VIII:

The Word of the Father descended to earth, and the radiant angel said to the Theotokos: “Rejoice, O blessed one who alone hast preserved the bridal chamber, do thou accept the conception of the pre-eternal God and Lord, that He might, as God, save the human race from deception.

Song of Ascents, the first antiphon of Tone IV:

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: Precious in the sight of the Lord * is the death of His saints.

Verse: What shall I render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me?

Let every breath praise the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW, §57 (14:1-13)

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when

Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

After Psalm 50, this Sticheron, in Tone VI:

The disciple of the most evil devil danced, and received thy head as her reward, O forerunner. O feast full of blood! Better would it have been not to have sworn thine oath, O iniquitous Herod, grandson of lies! For even though thou didst make thy vow, it was not well sworn. Better would it have been to be proved false, than to cut off the head of the forerunner, who spake the truth. Yet, honoring the Baptist as the greatest born of women, we call him blessed, as is meet.

Two canons of the holy forerunner

ODE I

Canon I, with 8 Troparia, including its Irmos.

The composition of John the Monk, in Tone VIII:

Irmos: **Having passed through the water as upon dry land, * and having escaped the malice of the Egyptians, * the Israelites cried aloud: * Unto our God and Redeemer let us sing.**

Let us hymn the sacred forerunner, the prophet who appeared from the womb of a barren woman unto Him Who ineffably is borne in the Virgin's womb.

Having transcended the boundaries of nature, thou didst preserve the laws of righteousness, denouncing an iniquitous union, undaunted by the king's cruelty.

Nurtured by the law as with milk, thou didst oppose the vile adultery, sealing the legislation of lawful union like a seal of the law.

Theotokion: **T**he ranks of angels and mortals praise thee unceasingly, O Mother unwedded; for thou didst bear the Creator in thine arms as a babe.

Canon II, with 6 Troparia, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in the same Tone:

Irmos: **Unto Him Who overthrew the tyranny of Pharaoh in the sea * and led Israel over dry land, * let us chant unto Christ our God, * for He hath been glorified throughout the ages.**

The beauteous lamb of the wilderness, the fruit of Zachariah, and the offshoot which Elizabeth bore beyond hope, commandeth the faithful to celebrate his honored memory beforehand.

O birthday full of blood! O abominable feast! For Herod mingled drunkenness with slaying, and his table was full of vile murder.

O ye faithful, let us hymn the Baptist who denounced iniquitous Herod and endured beheading, slain for his zeal for God.

Theotokion: **T**hou hast given birth to the infinite Word of God, Who made His abode within thee, O pure Birthgiver of God, and ineffably became incarnate from thee twofold in nature, as thine only Son.

Katavasia: **I**nscribing the invincible weapon of the Cross upon the waters, * **M**oses marked a straight line before him with his staff * and divided the Red Sea, * opening a path for Israel who went over dry-shod. * **T**hen he marked a second line across the waters * and united them in one, * overwhelming the chariots of Pharaoh. * **T**herefore let us sing to Christ our God, * for He hath been glorified.

ODE III

Canon I

Irmos: **O** Lord, Creator of the vault of Heaven * and Builder of the Church, * do Thou strengthen me in Thy love, O Summit of desire, * O Support of the faithful, * O only Lover of mankind.

As mediator standing between the old and the new covenant of the Gospel preaching, thou didst denounce the iniquitous union of the tyrant, and, rejoicing, didst accept a glorious death.

Instructed beforehand by her iniquitous mother, the girl said unto Herod, who was befuddled with drunkenness: “Give me the head of John on a platter, that I may present to my mother the gift she desireth!”

The shameless tyrant, unable to endure the reproof of thy God-bearing tongue, O glorious prophet, gave thy precious martyr’s head to the girl as a reward for her dancing.

Theotokion: **H**aving made thy bodily abode within the Virgin, O Lord, Thou didst appear unto mankind, in that it was fitting that they behold Thee. Her didst Thou show to be the true Theotokos and the help of the faithful, O thou only Lover of mankind.

Canon II

Irmos: **T**here is none as holy as the Lord, * and none as righteous as our God, * **W**hom the whole of creation doth hymn: * **T**here is none more righteous than Thee, O Lord.

None greater than John hath arisen among those born of women!” cried Christ the Truth; for in the womb the created being recognized the One Who had created him, and proclaimed Him with his mother’s voice.

Having first pointed to the Lamb with his finger, he next denounced Herod with his tongue, and, lastly, poureth forth miracles upon us through his head, as from a sacred vessel.

Thy nativity was glorious, thy life blameless, and thy departure honorable, O Baptizer of Christ. Thy pointing to Christ was awesome, thy death was precious, and thy burial full of glory.

Theotokion: **A**s God, O Only-begotten One, thou didst abase Thyself, that Thou mayest save those whom Thou hadst created, for whose sake Thou didst become a man, incarnate of the Virgin; and transforming my whole nature, Thou hast brought it to Thy Father.

Katavasia: **T**he rod of Aaron is an image of this mystery, * for when it budded it showed who should be priest. * So in the Church, that once was barren, * the wood of the Cross hath now budded forth, * filling her with strength and steadfastness.

Sessional Hymn of the holy forerunner, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “Of the Wisdom ...”:

Having shone forth by the judgment of God from a barren woman, and loosed the bonds on the tongue of thy father, thou didst show forth the Sun Who illumineth thee as the morning-star, and to the people in the wilderness didst proclaim the Creator, the Lamb Who taketh away the sins of the world. Wherefore, thou didst denounce the king with zeal, O ever-memorable and all-praised John, and thy most glorious head was cut off. Pray thou to Christ God, that He grant forgiveness of sins unto those who with love celebrate thy holy memory. (Twice)

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion in Tone VIII:

All we, the generations of mankind, * call thee blessed, * in that thou art the Virgin who alone among women * hast given birth without seed unto God in the flesh; * for the fire of the Godhead made its abode within thee, * and thou didst feed the Creator and Lord * with milk as an infant. * Wherefore, we, the race of mankind and of angels, * glorify thy birthgiving, * and together we cry out to thee: * Entreat Christ God to grant forgiveness of sins ** unto those who with faith worship thy most holy Offspring.

ODE IV

Canon I

Irmos: **T**hou, O Lord, art my strength and Thou art my power, * Thou art my God and Thou art my joy, * Thou Who, while never leaving the bosom of Thy Father, * hast visited our poverty. * Therefore with the Prophet Habbakuk I cry unto Thee, * ‘Glory to Thy power, O Lover of mankind!’

He who was unable to endure the censure of boldness and the forthrightness of piety, who incurred the retribution of the law, who was depraved by vile pleasures, having bound him who is enrolled immaterially in the heavenly choirs before the end, placed him under guard.

The wretched voluptuary, sick with spiritually harmful drunkenness and the burning of fornication, having been bound by the dancing of a young woman's feet, becometh the murderer of the prophet; for he conceived drunkenness, the mother of fornication, and begat grievous iniquity.

Of a truth, in thee the divine voice did not prove false; for thou art the greatest among the prophets, in that thou wast deemed worthy to prophesy from thy mother's womb, as a fetus not fully formed, and seeing God the Word Whom thou hadst prophesied, thou didst baptize Him in the body.

Theotokion: **T**hou art the boast of the faithful, O thou who knewest not wedlock; thou art the intercessor and refuge of Christians, their bulwark and haven. For thou bearest entreaties to thy Son, O all-immaculate one, and savest from misfortunes those who with faith and love know thee to be the pure Theotokos.

Canon II

Irmos: **F**rom the overshadowed mountain, * from the only Theotokos, * the Prophet in divine vision * foresaw Thy coming in the flesh, O Word, * and with fear he glorified Thy power.

Thou didst make clear to us the kingdom of Christ, showing the people the paths of repentance, and denouncing the iniquitous Herod, O wise John, thou great preacher.

Unable to bear reproof, Herod was overcome with wrath, jealousy and bitterness, O Baptist; and he marked the day of his birth by cutting off thy head, O preacher of Christ.

Be glad, O Baptist, that thy soul may make merry; for here thou didst denounce the ungodly Herod, while in Hades thou didst preach to the souls, saying: "Our salvation draweth nigh!"

The earth marvelleth at thy life, O John; heaven proclaimeth thine unjust murder; and the Church, chanting, declareth the multitude of thy virtues.

Theotokion: **B**orn of the immaculate Virgin Mother, O Thou Who hast put on my whole nature save for sin, Thou didst preserve her pure even after she gaveth birth.

Katavasia: **O** Lord, I have heard the mystery of Thy dispensation; * I have considered Thy works, * and I have glorified Thy Divinity.

ODE V

Canon I

Irmos: **O** Light never-waning, * why hast Thou turned Thy face from me * and why hath the alien darkness surrounded me, * wretched though I be? * But do Thou guide my steps I implore Thee * and turn me back towards the light of Thy commandments.

Inspired by the enmity of her mother, the yet more savage offspring of a savage lioness demanded as the price of her foul demonic dancing the head of the forerunner and herald, which the wild beasts themselves revered in the wilderness.

O Thine ineffable and unapproachable judgments, O Lover of mankind! For the vile young woman won with her dancing him who, while yet in his mother's womb, was a receptacle of the Holy Spirit, and who grew in chastity and purity.

When he who with love and ardor preferred his intercourse with iniquity, he permitted the murder of the prophet to be added to his birthday drinking and with love of pleasure mingled a cup full of the holy blood of the prophet.

Theotokion: Possessing maternal boldness before thy Son, O most pure one, disdain not the thought of kinship with us, we pray, for thee alone do Christians set before the Master as a merciful cleansing.

Canon II

Irmos: Thou hast enlightened * with the knowledge of God * the ends of the universe * that lay in the night of ignorance, * do Thou also, O Lord, illumine me * with the dawning of Thy love for mankind.

The forerunner, the lamb of the wilderness and treasure of the whole world, prepareth a spiritual banquet for us today.

O John, thou didst denounce Herod, the cruel lover of Herodias, the slave of lust and violator of the laws.

Herodias danceth, and John is bound and slain. O the drunkenness of Herod! O the mindlessness of his soul!

Theotokion: Rejoice, O pure one, thou divine mountain from whence the stone was quarried without the aid of the hands of men, thou mountain of curds which provided God the Word with a body!

Katavasia: O thrice-blessed Tree, on which Christ the king and Lord was stretched! * Through thee the beguiler fell, * who tempted mankind with the tree. * He was caught in the trap set by God, * who was crucified upon thee in the flesh, * granting peace unto our souls.

ODE VI

Canon I

Irmos: Cleanse me, O Savior, * for many are mine iniquities; * lead me up from the abyss of evils I pray Thee, * for unto Thee have I cried, * and Thou hast hearkened unto me, * O God of my salvation.

Bringing tribulation upon thyself for the commandments of the law, O blessed one, with reproofs thou didst chastise the one who was committing iniquity; for thou wast not a reed shaken by the winds of the enemy.

Thy head, dripping with the blood of thy slaughter, was offered as a prize for a lustful display, but continued to denounce Herod as one who committed incest, even after thine end.

Clad in camels' hair while in the wilderness, thou didst live as splendidly as a king therein; and bearing royal adornment therein, thou didst gain dominion over the passions.

Theotokion: **M**ay we be delivered from grievous transgressions through thy supplications, O pure Birthgiver of God, and may we receive divine radiance from the Son of God Who was ineffably incarnate from thee, O most pure one.

Canon II

Irmos: **A**s Thou didst deliver the prophet from the depths * of the abyss, **O** Christ God, * so deliver me also from my sins, * **O** Lover of mankind, * and guide my life, I pray Thee.

Honoring the decapitation of thine honored and most praised head, O forerunner of Christ, we glorify thine ever-laudable and universal memory, O most blessed one.

O the vile feast! O the bitter birthday! O the drunkenness of the abominable and iniquitous Herod! For he was held fast by iniquity and, denounced, he was persuaded to slay the prophet.

The new Egyptian woman, dancing wantonly in the midst of the feast, asked for the head which had denounced her mother, the paramour of Herod.

Theotokion: **T**he Son of the Virgin is now shown to have first been the Son of the Father, Who is not understood to be different in any fashion from the visible Son; and He hath remained One, perfect in both His natures.

Katavasia: **J**onah stretched out his hands in the form of a cross * within the belly of the sea monster, * plainly prefiguring the redeeming Passion. * Cast out from thence after three days, * he foreshadowed the marvelous Resurrection of Christ our God, * who was crucified in the flesh and enlightened the world * by His Rising on the third day.

Kontakion of the holy forerunner, in Tone V:

The glorious beheading of the forerunner * was part of God's dispensation, * that he might proclaim to those in Hades * the coming of the Savior. * Let Herodias, who demanded the iniquitous murder, therefore lament; * for she loved not the law of God nor the age of life, ** but rather this false and transitory one.

Ikos: **T**he birthday of Herod was shown to all to be unholy when, into the midst of those who feasted, the head of the faster was borne as though it were food. Joy was joined to grief and laughter transformed into bitter lamentation. For, bearing the head of the Baptist on a platter, the girl entered in among them all, as she said. And because of Herod's oath lamentation fell upon all who reclined there with the king. She did not gladden them, nor even Herod himself. For he said: They sorrowed not with true grief, but with that which is feigned and transitory.

ODE VII

Canon I

Irmos: **O**nce in Babylon the fire stood in awe * of God's condescension; * for which sake the youths in the furnace, * dancing with joyous steps as in a meadow, chanted: * **O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!**

Armed with lustful desire and grievous drunkenness, striking against the Baptizer of Christ, the immovable tower of abstinence and indestructible city of chastity, the iniquitous Herod was shattered.

Her mind beguiled by the persuasions of her mother, she who was the pupil of the devil was neither afraid nor ashamed, nor in any way loath to bear thy precious head shamelessly on a platter.

Sent forth like an angel, thou didst shine forth like a beacon; as a prophet thou didst preach Christ Who appeared as the Lamb of God; and as a martyr thou wast beheaded, proclaiming Him to the dead in Hades.

Theotokion: **D**elivered from the ancient fall and condemnation by thy birth giving, O Virgin Mother, we ever glorify thee as the manifest cause of our liberation, with thy Son Who gaveth Himself as deliverance for us.

Canon II

Irmos: **O** Thou who in the beginning founded the earth * and by Thy word made the heavens firm, * blessed art Thou throughout the ages, * **O Lord God of our Fathers.**

Preaching the law of God, John was not afraid to teach the impious and iniquitous Herod to be chaste; for the fire of sin burned within him.

O the head which manifestly set forth the law and cried to Herod from out of the ground: "It is not fit for thee, who committest iniquity, to wear the purple robe of kingship as a garment of tyranny!"

The iniquitous Herod, armed with vile weaponry, committed an iniquitous deed with an oath, drunk at the banquet he was holding for himself.

Theotokion: **T**hough incorporeal, the Creator of all became immutably incarnate; and being not subject to time, He was known to enter time through the Virgin, remaining as He had been, and becoming what He had not been, without commingling.

Katavasia: **T**he senseless decree of the wicked tyrant, * breathing forth threats and blasphemy hateful to God, * confused the people. * Yet neither the fury of the wild beast nor the roaring of the fire * could frighten the three Children: * but standing together in the flame, * fanned by the wind that brought refreshment as the dew, they sang: * 'Blessed and supremely praised art Thou, * **O our God and the God of our fathers.'**

ODE VIII

Canon I

Irmos: In his wrath the Chaldean Tyrant made the furnace blaze, * with heat fanned sevenfold for the servants of God; * but when he perceived that they had been saved by a greater power * he cried aloud to the Creator and Redeemer; * ‘ye children bless, ye priests praise, * ye people, supremely exalt Him throughout all ages’.

Going before Thy nativity and divine suffering, in the nethermost parts of the earth John, as the voice of the Word, becometh, through the sword, the prophet and herald of Thy coming there, crying: O ye dead, as Life-bestower, O ye blind, as the Giver of light, O ye captives, as your Redeemer! Supremely exalt Christ throughout all ages.

He who from a barren woman preceded the Offspring of the Virgin hath now, through the cutting off of his head, become the precursor of the voluntary crucifixion of the Creator of all, crying to those in Hades: Ye children bless; ye priests hymn; ye people supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

When thy body was deprived of thy head, O forerunner, thy masterly soul was parted from thy flesh; but the divinity of Emmanuel was never separated from his flesh, and not a bone of God the Master was broken. Wherefore, we supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

Theotokion: O most pure Virgin, bearer of the Lord, by thy merciful supplication cleanse thou the wounds and sores of my soul, and raise me up who am fallen. Save, O save me, the prodigal, O all-immaculate one! For thou art mine intercessor and help, who alone art pure and blessed throughout all ages.

Canon II

Irmos: Glorified in the holy mountain, * the Lord revealed the mystery of the Ever-Virgin unto Moses * in the flames of the burning bush: * praise ye and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

Him who proclaimed the coming of Christ to those in Hades, exclaiming with faith: “The Lord of glory cometh, loosing men’s pangs!” let us supremely exalt throughout all ages.

Herod imprisoned thee in a dungeon, O John, thou second Elijah, and, having bound thee with iron chains, slew thee, the faithful and sacred proclaimer of repentance and the kingdom.

O feast full of blood! O food mingled with murder! O banquet replete with vainglory! O the inhumanity and vile murder of the iniquitous Herod!

Theotokion: Wholly above and wholly below, in the bosom of the Father and with Thy Mother, wholly God and wholly man by nature, of One Hypostasis yet dual in nature art Thou, O Merciful One.

Katavasia: O children equal in number to the Trinity: * bless ye God, the Father and Creator; * hymn ye the Word Who came down * and transformed the fire into dew; * and supremely exalt ye Him Who giveth life unto all, * the all-holy Spirit, * throughout the ages!

ODE IX

Canon I

Irmos: Every ear is awestruck at hearing of God's ineffable condescension, * for the Most High voluntarily descended and assumed flesh, * becoming man in the Virgin's womb; * wherefore we the faithful magnify the most pure Theotokos.

The evil horde and the devil, its commander, were afraid of thy divinely eloquent tongue which proclaimed Christ, O prophet, and through the agency of a wanton young woman prevailed upon Herod to cut off thy head; but we magnify thee as the baptizer of Christ.

The valley of humble nature hath been exalted, and the hill of deadly pride hath been laid low; for the voice of the Light crying in the wilderness hath cried out in the dwellings of Hades: "Lift up, ye gates, for the King of all shall enter herein."

Human passions tremble, and the demons flee in fear from the overshadowing of the grace given thee by God. But deliver thy flock, which ever magnifieth thee with faith, O forerunner of the Lord, from temptation by both.

Theotokion: Draw Thy bow, and prosper and reign, O Son of the Mother of God, subduing the Moslems who wage war against us and granting victory to our Orthodox hierarchs over all heresies, through the entreaties of her who gaveth birth to Thee, O Word of God.

Canon II

Irmos: The prophetic vision of the lawgiver on the mountain, * in the fire of the burning bush, * prefigured thy birthgiving O Ever-Virgin, * the salvation of us the faithful, * wherefore with never silent hymns we magnify thee.

Again doth Jezebel exult over Elijah; again doth the Egyptian woman seek after Joseph; for the vile Herodias hath now been seen to devise the death of the prophet and baptizer of the Savior.

Beheaded by Herod, O John, thou wast sent to the souls in Hades, to proclaim Him Who had come to save all of the faithful who had reposed, from the time of Adam on.

O John, honored martyr of the Lord, lamp-stand of the Light, voice of the Word, herald of the Lamb of God, lamb of the wilderness: pray that those who hymn thee be saved.

Theotokion: **T**hou alone among women wast shown to be a virgin even after giving birth; thou alone among women wast shown forth as the Birthgiver of God; thou alone hast loosed the pangs of Eve and caused the primeval curse to wither away.

Katavasia: **O** Theotokos, thou art a mystical Paradise, * who untill'd brought forth Christ. * by Whom the life-giving Tree of the Cross hath been planted upon the earth: * Therefore celebrating its exaltation on this day, * Him do we worship * and thee do we magnify.

Exapostilarion of the holy forerunner:

Spec. Mel.: "While the disciples watched ...":

With hymns of praise let us magnify the forerunner of grace, who is known to be the greatest among the prophets and was chosen before the apostles; for he was beheaded for the sake of the law of the Lord.

Glory ..., another Exapostilarion:

The vile Herod was unable to cut off the reproofs of thy tongue, O baptizer of the Savior, and therefore deceitfully cut off the head of thee, the husbandman of purity.

Both now ..., Theotokion:

Having destroyed the curse on the world by thy divine birthgiving, O pure Maiden, through thy supplications, deliver from all misfortunes the flock which entreateth thee with faith.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera of the holy forerunner, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "O most glorious wonder ...":

O most glorious wonder! * the impure wanton young woman hath borne * to her adulterous mother * the sacred head, * which even the angels reverence, * and which denounced her iniquitous acts. * O thine ineffable patience, O Lover of mankind, * whereby, save Thou our souls, O Christ, ** in that Thou alone art full of tender compassion. (Twice)

O the hardness of Herod's heart! * He who dishonored God * by violating His laws * displayeth his hypocrisy by deceitfully keeping his oath * and joineth murder to adultery, * feigning regret. * O Thine unspeakable loving-kindness, O Master, * whereby save Thou our souls, O Christ, ** in that Thou alone art compassionate!

O marvel past understanding! * The seal of the prophets, * the earthly angel, is shown to be * the price of wanton dancing; * the tongue of theology * is sent forth as herald of Christ to those in Hades. * O Thine ineffable providence, O Master, * whereby save Thou our souls, O Christ, ** in that Thou alone art compassionate!

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

Again Herodias rageth insanely, again is she vexed. O what deceitful dancing, what a feast of deception! The Baptist is beheaded, and Herod is troubled. Through the supplications of Thy forerunner, O Lord, grant peace to our souls.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone VI:

O Theotokos, thou art the true vine * that hast budded forth for us the Fruit of life. * Thee do we entreat: * Pray thou, O Lady, with the holy apostles, that He have mercy upon our souls.

Great Doxology.

After the Trisagion, the Troparion of the holy forerunner, in Tone II:

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise * but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner, * for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets * since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters * Him Whom thou didst proclaim. * Then having endured great suffering for the Truth, * Thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in Hades * the good tidings that God had appeared in the flesh * taking away the sin of the world ** and granting us great mercy.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion, in the same Tone:

All of thy most glorious mysteries are beyond comprehension, * O Theotokos; * for, thy purity sealed and thy virginity intact, * thou art known to be a true Mother, having given birth unto God. ** Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

Litanies and dismissal. And holy oil is given to the faithful from the lamp of the holy forerunner.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from ODE III of the first canon, and 4 from ODE VI of the second canon of the holy forerunner.

As mediator standing between the old and the new covenant of the Gospel preaching, thou didst denounce the iniquitous union of the tyrant, and, rejoicing, didst accept a glorious death. (Twice)

Instructed beforehand by her iniquitous mother, the girl said unto Herod, who was befuddled with drunkenness: "Give me the head of John on a platter, that I may present to my mother the gift she desireth!"

The shameless tyrant, unable to endure the reproof of thy God-bearing tongue, O glorious prophet, gave thy precious martyr's head to the girl as a reward for her dancing.

Honoring the decapitation of thine honored and most praised head, O forerunner of Christ, we glorify thine ever-laudable and universal memory, O most blessed one.

O the vile feast! O the bitter birthday! O the drunkenness of the abominable and iniquitous Herod! For he was held fast by iniquity and, denounced, he was persuaded to slay the prophet.

The new Egyptian woman, dancing wantonly in the midst of the feast, asked for the head which had denounced her mother, the paramour of Herod.

Theotokion: **T**he Son of the Virgin is now shown to have first been the Son of the Father, Who is not understood to be different in any fashion from the visible Son; and He hath remained One, perfect in both His natures.

Troparion of the holy forerunner, in Tone II:

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise * but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner, * for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets * since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters * Him Whom thou didst proclaim. * Then having endured great suffering for the Truth, * Thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in Hades * the good tidings that God had appeared in the flesh * taking away the sin of the world ** and granting us great mercy.

Kontakion of the holy forerunner, in Tone V:

The glorious beheading of the forerunner * was part of God's dispensation, * that he might proclaim to those in Hades * the coming of the Savior. * Let Herodias, who demanded the iniquitous murder, therefore lament; * for she loved not the law of God nor the age of life, ** but rather this false and transitory one.

Prokeimenon, in Tone VII: The righteous man shall be glad in the Lord * and shall hope in Him.

Verse: Hearken, O God, unto my prayer, when I make supplication unto Thee.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, § 33 (ACTS 13: 25-32)

In those days: John fulfilled his course, and said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus.

Alleluia, in Tone IV: The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree, and like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied.

Verse: They that are planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God they shall blossom forth.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK, § 24 (6: 14-30)

At that time: Herod heard of John; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that

sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Communion Verse: In everlasting remembrance shall the righteous be; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings.

At meals the faithful abstain from meat, cheese, eggs and fish. Monastics are permitted two meals on this feastday if it coincide with Wednesday or Friday.