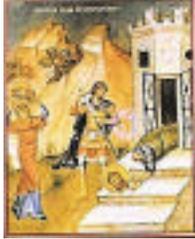


August 29

D. ☩ Severing the Honorable Head of the Glorious, Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John



St. John the Baptist underwent beheading in the 32nd year after the birth of Christ. Prior to this time St. John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas because he accused the latter of divorcing his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian King Arethas and for unlawful cohabitation (see Lev. 18:16; 20:21) with Herodias who was married to Herod's brother Phillip. A party was planned on Herod's birthday. The niece of Herod, the daughter of the impure Herodias, so pleased Herod through her dancing during the feast and lying with him that the king with an oath promised to give her anything she asked, even up to half of his kingdom. The dancer, instructed by her own mother, then asked that he give her the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod, having great respect for John, but mainly afraid of the people, honored St. John as a prophet (Mt. 14:5; Mk. 6:18-20), grieved for a while, but for the sake of an oath although wrong and for the sake of his guests did not want to renege on the lawless oath, sent guards to the prison who severed the head of John, gave it to the maiden and the maiden gave it to her mother (Mt. 14:6-12; Mk. 6:21-29). Wild joy seized Herodias when she saw the head of her hateful accuser brought to her. In an impulse of senseless delight, she hastened to take pleasure even over the dead righteous man in revenge as she pierced the accusatory and explanatory tongue of the Holy Forerunner with a needle and threw the holy head in a dishonorable place. (See January 7, February 24 and June 14). For his evil deeds Herod received his reward in the 38th year after the birth of Christ: His armies were defeated by Arethas, who acted against him for dishonoring his daughter who was cast aside for the sake of Herodias, and in the year 39 Herod was sent to prison by Caligula _).

Troparion, see Jan. 7

Kontakion, tone 5

**The glorious beheading of the Forerunner,
Became a divine dispensation,
That he might proclaim the coming of the Savior to those in Hades.
So let Herodias who asked for lawless murder grieve,
For she loved neither the law of God nor the age that lives,
But one that is artificial and temporary.**

Paramoea see February 24. **Matins Gospel:** Mt. 14:1-13; sel. 57.
Epistle: Acts 13:25-32; sel. 33. **Gospel:** Mk. 6:14-30; sel. 24.

Note that if this feast falls on Sunday, it anticipates all the services of the Resurrection.

On this day the Church established a **fast** in which it is not allowed to eat fish because of the abstinent life of the Saint and the impure murderous pouring out of his blood by Herod. Glorifying on this day the great faster and desert-dweller who lived in a waterless and grassless desert, the Church does not have other proper ways to adequately honor it except through fasting and prayer. And recalling the circumstances of the beheading, the wrong promise given in the middle of the banquet because of the dancing, the Church by establishing this fast raises the issue of gluttony connected to the sacrifice and bloodshed of animals. The establishment of this fast is ancient, as is the establishment of the feast itself on which sermons were already delivered in the 4th century _).

Note that in 1769 during Catherine the 2nd's reign, during the war with the Turks and Poles, the Russian Church established the commemoration of Orthodox warriors who were killed in warfare for their faith and fatherland on this day. This rite of commemoration is published in a special book.

_). The circumstances of the beheading of the Holy Baptizer are terrible and an abomination. Herod, lawlessly feasting with intemperate men and loose women on his birthday, got drunk with wine and seduced by the dance, utters an unreasonable oath, and then gives an order to kill the innocent and holy one and that finishes the most shocking evil deed and pours innocent blood on his own birthday. "O hateful banquet, full of impious behavior and bloodthirsty murder", the Holy Church exclaims in its hymns for this day. "Now", St. John Chrysostom in a talk on this day says, "the Gospel announced to us the evil deeds of Herod, about the rage of women, about the

insane gladness of men, about impious feasting, about the lawless gift, about the criminal deed, about the burial of the most honorable body. I am terrified, my beloved, when to my eyes are represented the fulfillment of the deed by Herod". "If only you had not sworn, Herod," the Holy Church exclaims in the hymns for this day, "if you had sworn, if only you had not kept your oath; for it is better to have lied and attained life, than to speak truly and to cut off the head of the Forerunner".

—). Among people this feast is known by the name of John the Faster: this day is carried out by the people in strict fast. Abstinence sometimes reaches strange extremes: they become careful about something round that reminds them of the form of a head, for example, cabbage, potato, apples.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 0302-0303
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