

The Beheading of St. John the Baptist

Mark 6:14-30

¹ And king Herod heard of him; (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. (KJV)

The Church gathers this day around the world as is done each year to remember and commemorate the beheading of St. John the Baptist. The Church holds St. John in high regard.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: “For I say unto you, Among **those** that are **born of women** there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (Lk.7:28)

The Church preserves the memory of the gruesome death John the Baptist experienced. St. John was chosen among all men of all centuries to baptize the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today is solemn as the Church remembers and honors the beheading of St. John. The Church has preserved this solemn remembrance through the centuries. During the past twenty years, this date has taken on additional solemnity.

Twenty years ago, believers were in the Divine Liturgy on this date and St. John the Baptist's beheading was being commemorated. During the same time, the United States was under historic attack.

In New York City, Somerset County, Pennsylvania and Washington D.C, the tragic attack unfolded on September 11, 2001. Life in the United States was forever changed. Thousands of lives were lost and countless millions affected.

St. John's beheading is seared into salvation history. St. John holds a special and unique place of honor in God's Holy Church. Fervent believers look for the deep meaning that this date holds for salvation and the world.

The September 11 attack on the United States occurred on a Tuesday. Tuesday is dedicated to St. John the Baptist in God's Holy Church. St. John valued and preached repentance. (Mt.3:1-2)

The Church calls for fasting on September 11 each year as St. John's beheading is remembered and commemorated. Fasting combined with prayer is a way to draw closer to God and seek wisdom and guidance.

The world needs wisdom at this time. Violence did not originate with the beheading of St. John the Baptist. Violence predates the beheading of St. John and has continued extensively before and after the September 11 attacks on America.

We garner wisdom through the Gospel. We learn from the life and teachings of St. John. The desire for peace has continued through the centuries. The Lord Jesus Christ embodies, proclaims and is the Source for peace.

The challenge for each generation is to reduce and eliminate violence. Achieving peace in society is most difficult. The daily news is filled with reports of violence.

The soul hungers for peace. Praying to St. John will enlighten believers. Being committed to Jesus Christ as was St. John, will strengthen believers. Jesus Christ is reassuring and present in times of violence.

Jesus Christ offers light in times of darkness. Jesus Christ offers healing when individuals hurt the most. Americans are still healing from the attacks twenty years ago.

Countless victims and their families still feel the pain of the attacks twenty years ago. Loved ones departed this life tragically. Serious believers are always deeply affected with the beheading of St. John the Baptist.

Today is a day to give to God. Today is a day to fast and pray to God. Turning to God and drawing closer to God will foster internal peace, light and hope.

The Beheading of St. John the Baptist. August 29/September 11, 2021.
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