

THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER AND BAPTIZER OF THE LORD



Six months before his appearance in Nazareth to the All-holy Virgin Mary, the great archangel of God, Gabriel appeared to Zacharias the high priest in the Temple at Jerusalem. Before he announced the miraculous conception to the unwed virgin [Mary], the archangel announced the miraculous conception to the childless old woman [Elizabeth]. Zacharias did not immediately believe the words of the herald of God and this is why his tongue was tied with dumbness and remained as such until eight days after the birth of John. On that day, the relatives of Zacharias and Elizabeth gathered for the young child's circumcision and for the sake of giving him a name. When they asked the father what name he wishes to give to his son and being dumb, he wrote on a tablet: "John." At that moment his tongue became loosed and he began to speak. The home of Zacharias was on the heights between Bethlehem and Hebron. The news of the appearance of the angel of God to Zacharias was spread throughout all of Israel, as well as of his dumbness and the loosening of his tongue at that moment when he wrote the name "John." The news concerning this even reached Herod. Therefore, when Herod sent soldiers to slay the children throughout Bethlehem, he directed men to the hilly dwelling place of the family of Zacharias to kill John also. However, Elizabeth promptly hid the child. Enraged, at this King Herod sent his executioners to Zacharias in the Temple to slay him (for it happened that it was Zacharias' turn again to serve in the Temple of Jerusalem). Zacharias was slain between the court and the temple and his blood coagulated and petrified on the stone pavers and remained a perpetual witness against Herod. Elizabeth hid with the child in a cave where she died soon after. The young child John remained in the wilderness alone under the care of God and God's angels.

HYMN OF PRAISE to SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

By God's miracle, John entered the world,
As once did Sarah's and Abraham's Isaac,
By God's miracle, remained alive
From Herod's bloody knife.
The knife, the young child John missed,
But John's father, it did not miss;
By God's miracle, John in the desert
For thirty years, he sustained himself,
To the servant of God angels are shepherds
To the poor angels are guardians!
John grew loveable lamb,
The Lamb of God to serve,
To proclaim the bright day, before the sun,
The Unknown, recognized and glorified.
Of the great prophets, the last
And of God's apostles, the beginning.
As Elijah, with God he speaks
And as an apostle, loves and rebukes,
Of the high priest, wondrous son,
Of the martyr of God, the first-born brother.

(written by **St Nikolaj Velimirovic** in "Proolog from Ohrid")

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