

# Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church

1723 E. Fairmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD. 21231  
 410-276-6171 [www.HolyTrinityOrthodox.com](http://www.HolyTrinityOrthodox.com)



**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Tone 4**

**August 24/September 6, 2020**

Hieromartyr Eutychius (1st c.), Disciple of St. John the Theologian; **Translation of the relics of the Holy Hierarch Peter, Metropolitan of Kiev (1479)**; Synaxis of all Saints of Moscow; Martyr Tation at Claudiopolis (305); Virgimartyr Cyra of Persia (558); Venerable George Limniotes the Confessor of Mt. Olympus (716); Equal-to-the-Apostles Cosmas of Aitolia (1779); Venerable Arsenius, Abbot of Komel (Vologda) (1550); Hieromartyr Maxim Gorlitsky, priest (1914); Venerable Aristoclius elder of Moscow (1918); Hieromartyr Seraphim (1946). Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Petrovskaya" ("of St. Peter of Moscow") (1306).

**Today's Scriptural Readings:**

1 Corinthians 16: 13-24 / Matthew 21: 33-42

This Week's Liturgical Calendar – All Services in Church		
Thursday, September 10 <sup>th</sup>	6:00 PM	Vigil Service
Friday, September 11 <sup>th</sup> (Strict Fast Day) <i>Beheading of St. John the Baptist</i>	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy <i>General Confession – 8:30 AM</i>
Saturday, September 12 <sup>th</sup>	6:00 PM	Vigil Service
Sunday, September 13 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 AM	Divine Liturgy <i>General Confession – 9:30 AM</i>

**Divine Services at Holy Trinity are live-streamed at**  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HolyTrinitySermons>

### **Our Condolences**

We express our sincere condolences to Natallia Makarava. Her father +Stepan (Stefan) unexpectedly passed from this life on Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. He was young at heart, very active and will be sorely missed. And our heart-felt condolences go to Margarita Vinogradova. Her mother +Alexandra peacefully passed from this life on Sunday, August 30. She was kind, humble and loved by all. She and her husband recently celebrated their 55<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. And we express our warm condolences to Evodiya Oleksiuk. Her husband +Petro unexpectedly passed from this life in late July. Today we will mark his 40<sup>th</sup> day of passing. May our Lord grant rest eternal to the newly departed servants of God: +Stefan, +Alexandra and +Petr. Memory Eternal.

### **Panikhida Today**

Today we will serve a panikhida for the newly departed servants of God: +Stefan (3<sup>rd</sup> Day); +Alexandra (9<sup>th</sup> Day) and +Petr (40<sup>th</sup> Day). May their memory be eternal.

### **Marriage Blessing Today**

Today after the Divine Services we will serve a special marriage blessing ceremony for the servants of God: Vladimir and Valentina Timofeev. We pray that God will bless them with many more years together. Congratulations to Vladimir and Valentina and their daughter Marina Barton.

### **Choir Meeting – September 8**

All choir members are encouraged to join our virtual Zoom meeting on Tuesday, September 8 at 7:00 PM. For log in information, please call Katherine Cardell at 240-606-3398.

### **Sunday School**

Next Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, our high school class will begin their Sunday School lessons online. The middle school class start date of online learning is still pending. The younger classes will not have online lessons. We will wait until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted to conduct in person classes. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. John.

### **Volunteer Needed for Painting**

We need a volunteer to paint our recently installed oil tanks next to the church. All supplies will be supplied. Contact Michael Mickel for more information: 410-666-2870 [mcmickel@verizon.net](mailto:mcmickel@verizon.net).

### **Challenge Grant – Matching Donations**

The Lisowsky and Mickel families have pledged to match all donations for the new front doors on a 1:1 ratio. For every dollar you donate, they will match one dollar, up to \$10,000 towards the new front doors. Double the value of your donation: \$20 becomes \$40, \$50 becomes \$100, and \$100 becomes \$200! **Donation forms are attached to this email bulletin.** Send in your donation today!

### **Cleaning Group – Group #3 / Join a Group – Help your brothers and sisters**

Group #3 will clean the week of September 7-12: Anca and Catalin Frujinoiu, Natalia Makarava, Mikhail Merzliakov. Please join a group. We always need more members. Thank you!

### **Vigil Candles: On the Altar and near St. Barbara**

**Sept. 6-12:** Candles offered by Elena Loyko for the health/salvation of the servants of God: Svetlana, Kristina and Dionisy. A \$15 donation will keep all three candles lit for one week. Please schedule your candle offering with Elena Loyko 443-537-8978.

### **Birthday / Anniversary Celebrations: September 6-12**

We offer our best wishes and birthday congratulations to Dmitriy Shkurba (9/06), Yelena Radchenko (9/08), and Theo Harris (9/11); Angel Day wishes to Natalie Burbelo, Natallia Makarava, Natalia Volkova, Natalie Blaszak, Natalia Gerachenko (9/08) and **Wedding Anniversary congratulations to Cy & Sue Reshetiloff (9/07 – 63<sup>rd</sup>)**. May God bless them with health, prosperity and many years. To include your birthday /anniversary in the bulletin please call Fr. John. Thank you.

### **[NEW Online Candlestand is Open !](#)**

Our parish has opened a new online candlestand, where you may purchase the placement of candles, submit names for commemoration and request panikhidas, molebens and 40-Day prayer requests. For each Sunday Liturgy, your requests must be submitted by 10:00 PM Saturday.

**To place your requests go [here](#)**

### **Prospora & Commemorations**

Because of COVID-19, we will not distribute small prosporas with your prayer/commemoration requests. However, if you want to have your prayer lists remembered during liturgy, you must submit the lists of names (living and/or departed) at our [online candlestand](#).

### **[Russian Festival – Online](#)**

The Russian Festival Committee has finalized the plans for this year's Russian Festival. The Festival will be exclusively online and will be conducted on four Saturdays in October. Each Saturday will feature specific menu items all of which will be sold for take-out only.

October 3: (a) shashlik and rice; (b) beef stroganoff and noodles.

October 10: (a) shashlik and rice; (b) chicken kotlety with kasha; (c) kolbasa with sauerkraut.

October 17: (a) shashlik and rice; (b) blinchiki (various fillings); (c) kolbasa with sauerkraut.

October 24 (a) shashlik and rice; (b) pelmeni; (c) beef stroganoff and noodles.

Each Saturday we will sell our famous artisan breads – bobka, cheese braid, raisin bread and rye bread – quarts of borscht and a selection of desserts. Russian souvenirs will also be available. All food and souvenir items will be ordered online for convenient curbside pickup.

For more information, please contact Art Lisowsky at 410-697-3324. [www.russfest.org](http://www.russfest.org)

## Russian Festival Volunteers

We need volunteers. The Festival will run four Saturdays 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Also, teams need to meet ahead of time to prepare their items. Please contact the following for volunteer information:

- Natallia Makarava (General Tasks) 443-625-8470
- Albert Blaszak (Kitchen) 410-799-3226
- Vadim Radchenko (Shashlik Team) 443-668-0648
- Valentina Zernetkina (Blinchiki Team) 443-825-9054
- Anna-Zumrat Shkurba (Pelmeni Team) 443-857-8541
- Tatiana Masiuk (Desserts) 410-987-4850

## NEW RESTRICTIONS

### **25% Limited attendance (Adults and Children)**

We must limit the total attendance of Divine Services to **25 persons**, not including clergy, altar servers and choir in the church and **25 persons** in the hall watching Divine Liturgy on the TV, all following social distancing and wearing masks. This is 25% total capacity.

In order to be fair and equitable in welcoming as many people to church as possible within these new restrictions, we have posted an online reservation form. Everyone who comes to church must complete this online form to reserve your spot for each Divine Service you wish to attend.

**Each week, make your mandatory reservations to attend Divine Services here:**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080945ABAE2BABFE3-divine>.

You must submit your reservation(s) in order to be permitted into the church building. Persons without reservations will not be allowed to enter. This pertains to everyone - adults and children.

Please be considerate of others. If you and/or your loved ones at home are not feeling well, or if you were exposed to someone with COVID-19, do not make a reservation. If you already made a reservation and symptoms appear afterwards, please cancel your reservation.

**Remember, everyone must wear a mask in the church and hall  
Your mask must cover both your mouth and nose**

### **Prayer read during the Spread of Devastating Pestilence**

**O** Lord our God, enter not into judgement with Thy servants, and compass us about with protection from the devastating pestilence stirred up against us. O kind-hearted Lord Who art inclined toward benevolence, have compassion on us, Thy humble and unworthy servants, who fall down before Thee with broken hearts and hope in Thy mercy.

*For Thine it is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

**Petitions offered up at the Augmented Litany of Divine Liturgy  
during the Spread of Devastating Pestilence**

Again we pray Thee, O Lord our God, that Thou mightest mercifully protect us from the devastating pestilence stirred up against us, and deliver Thy faithful people from spiritual and physical death; grant unto the sick healing and health, and unto all of us Thy divine protection and help; we pray Thee, O kind-hearted Lord, quickly hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray, that Thou mightest pacify the troubles of men and every fearful thing, compass Thy faithful about with firm hope, and instill in our hearts quietude; we pray Thee, O Lord, hearken and have mercy.

**Media Resources for the Family**

**Videos:**

Orthodox Films: [http://pravfilms.ru/index/khudozhestvennoe\\_pravoslavnoe\\_kino\\_onlajn/0-206](http://pravfilms.ru/index/khudozhestvennoe_pravoslavnoe_kino_onlajn/0-206)

Library of Orthodox Films: <https://azbyka.ru/video/1/filmy/>

St. Matrona of Moscow: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYPW7I3rG4Y&feature=youtu.be>

St. Gabriel of Georgia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcV3Qcj0mFM>

**Websites:**

Pravoslavie: <https://pravoslavie.ru/> (Russian)

Orthodox Christian: <https://orthochristian.com/> (English)

Russian Faith – Online Resources: <https://russian-faith.com/>

Orthodox Christianity Website: <http://www.pravmir.com/>

Professor Alexey Iliyich Osipov: <https://alexey-osipov.ru/> - Many translations available

**Submit your 2020 Pledge**

The mission of our parish is to spread the Word of God, to grow, to expand, to improve and not just to preserve our traditions. Our parish shouldn't become stale, but pursue holiness. We strive to fulfill the mission of our parish, through prayer, work and sacrifice. Prayer – because we are called to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17); work – because we are taught to increase the talents given to us (Matt. 25: 14-30); and sacrifice – because "everyone to whom much is given, from him will much be required" (Luke 12:48). Please be generous as the Lord is generous to you. When completing your pledge for the new year, please consider raising your level of giving. Our church cannot operate without your financial contributions. Our parish will grow only through your prayers, work and generous sacrifice.

**Please Remember in Your Prayers...**

**Archpriest George Konyev; Deacon Michael Bishop; Mat. Myra Kovalak; Mat. Klavdiya Burbelo; Kh. Jocelyn Mathewes; Mat. Natalia Kosich; Mat. Catherine Kowalchik; Marie Vass; Charles Snipes; Arthur-Stephen & Evelyn-Evanthia Lisowsky; Yelena Radchenko; Lydia Zorina; Katherine Plaskowitz; Philip Plaskowitz; Bernadine Borawick; Julia Aymold; Lilli Ann Hoffman; Lara Marinich; Ioann and Galina Zernetkin; Monika-Anastasia & Stephanie Handley; Blanche-Julia Stolkovich; Ekaterina Koroleva; Nina and Glen-Gregory Lewis; Lyudmila, Anton & Aleksander Karnup; John Alexander Bylen; Katherine Garrett; Kenneth Pukita; William and Ann Ferkile; Irina Kononova; Petr and Lyudmila Borodkin; Svetlana & Aleksey; Alla; Anna; Alla; Raisa, Zinaida; Pavel, Vladimir, Valentina, and Maria; Maria Pappas; Bonnie Duke; Diana**

Radchenko; **Aleksey & Lidia** Potapov; **Oleg and Andrei; Vitaliy, Tatiana, Olena & Nicholas** Berchuk; **Cynthia and Bill (Basil)** Popomaronis; **Andrei, Marina, Valentina and Vladimir; Valentina** Shultieva; **Katherina** Shultieva; **Shanna, Stephen, Trent-Michael, Grant-Alexander, Adalynn, Rosalyn** Lisowsky; **Julie** Smith; **Tayisia** Solvieva; **Leonid and Zoya; Jayne** Sudol; **Rita** and **Richard** Herber, **Mary** Orzolek, **George** Matassov; **Nikolai, Janice & John** DesLauriers; **Nicholas** Rodzianko; **Alexandra; Armen** Nostrant; **Vasiliy; Archpriest Michael, Alexandra, Larisa, Gabriel and Julianna; Elizabeth** Wright; **Shane-Michael** Sierakowski; **Samantha-Xenia** Tate; **Natalia** Gerachenko.

**Next Council Meeting: Thursday, September 24 – 7:00 PM in the Church Hall**  
**To receive the call-in information for the teleconference**  
**call Victor Marinich 443-910-3562**

<b>Fr. John Vass, Rector</b> 443-527-7067	Fr. Deacon Michael Bishop: 410-563-0472
Victor Marinich, <i>Council President:</i> 443-512-0985	Vadim Radchenko, <i>Vice President:</i> 410-465-6172
Andrei Burbelo, <i>Recording Secretary:</i> 732-598-5187	Albert Blaszak, <i>Treasurer:</i> 410-799-3226
Anna-Zumrat Shkurba, <i>Stewardship Chair:</i> 443-857-8541	<i>Member-At-Large:</i> Vacant
Natallia Makarava <i>Sisterhood President:</i> 443-625-8470	Michael Mickel, <i>Cemetery Manager:</i> 410-666-2870

**The Martyrs Adrian and Natalia**  
**September 8**

The Martyrs Adrian and Natalia were married in their youth for one year prior to their martyrdom. They lived in Bithynian Nicomedia during the time of the emperor Maximian (305-311). Having started his persecution, the emperor promised a reward to whomever would inform on Christians to bring them to trial. There began the denunciations, and through one of these there were seized 23 Christians, hiding in a cave near Nicomedia. They were tortured, urged to worship idols, and then taken to the judgement palace, in order to record their names and responses. Adrian, the head of the judgement palace, looking on as they brought in the people suffering with such courage for their faith, and how firmly and fearlessly they confessed Christ, asked: "What rewards do ye expect from your God for suffering?" The martyrs replied: "Such rewards, as we are not able to describe, nor thy mind comprehend". Inspired, Saint Adrian told the scribes: "Write me down also, that I be a Christian and with joy I do die for Christ God". The scribes reported about this to the emperor, who summoned Saint Adrian and asked: "Really, hast thou gone mad, that thou dost want to die? Come, cross out thine name from the lists and offer sacrifice to the gods, asking their forgiveness". Saint Adrian answered: "I am not mad, but the rather have been converted to health of mind". Maximian then ordered Adrian to be thrown into prison. His wife, Saint Natalia, knowing that her husband was suffering for Christ, rejoiced, since she herself was secretly a Christian. She hastened to the prison and encouraged her husband saying: "Blest be thou, mine lord, in that thou hast believed on Christ, wherein thou hast obtained a great treasure. Regret not anything of earth, neither beauty, nor youth (Adrian was then 28 years of age), nor riches. Everything worldly – is dust and ashes. Only faith and good deeds be pleasing to God". On the pledge of the other martyrs, they released Saint Adrian from prison to relate to his wife about the day of execution. Saint Natalia at first thought, that he had renounced Christ and thus had been set free, and she did not want to

let him into the house. The saint persuaded his wife, that he had not fled martyrdom, but rather had come to give her the news of the day of his execution.

They tortured Saint Adrian cruelly. The emperor advised the saint to have pity on himself and call on the gods, but the martyr answered: "Let thine gods say, what blessings they promise me, and then I shalt worship them, but if they cannot speak thus, then why should I worship them?" Saint Natalia did not cease to encourage her husband. She asked him also to convey for her a foremost prayer to God, that they would not compel her into a marriage with a pagan after his death. The executioner ordered the hands and the legs of the saints to be broken on the anvil. Saint Natalia, fearing that her husband would hesitate in seeing the sufferings of the other martyrs, besought the executioner to begin the execution with him and let her herself put his hands and legs on the anvil. They wanted to burn the bodies of the saints, but a strong storm arose and the fire went out. Many of the executioners even were struck by lightning. Saint Natalia took the hand of her spouse and kept it at home. Soon an army commander asked the emperor's approval to wed Saint Natalia, who was both young and rich. But she hid herself away in Byzantium. Here Saint Adrian appeared to her in a dream and said, that she would soon be at rest in the Lord. The anemic martyress, worn down by her former sufferings, in fact soon expired to God.

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**The Beheading of the Prophet,  
Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist**  
August 29 / September 11 (Friday)

**Strict Fast Day**

*The Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist: The Evangelists Matthew (Mt. 14: 1-12) and Mark (Mk. 6: 14-29) provide accounts about the Martyr's end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.*

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, holding one-fourth the rule of the Holy Land as governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and into each part put a governor. Herod Antipas received from the emperor Augustus the rule of Galilee). The prophet of

God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife – the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead co-habiting with Herodias, – the wife of his brother Philip (Lk. 3: 19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. The daughter of Herod, Salome, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl he swore to give her anything, whatsoever she would ask, anything up to half his kingdom. The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked, that she be given at once the head of John the Baptist on a plate. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He feared also the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of

Saint John and to give it to Salome. By tradition, the mouth of the dead head of the preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: "Herod, thou ought not to have the wife of Philip thy brother". Salome took the plate with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod's steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod was possessor of a parcel of land (the Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated 24 February). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebasteia, there where the wicked deed had been done. After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain while. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent to him the bound Jesus Christ, over Whom he made mockery (Lk. 23: 7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way for her such that her body was in the water, but her head trapped beneath the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now flailing helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck. The corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter made war against Herod. Having suffered defeat, Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligua and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain. And there they were from view.

In memory of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, the feast day established by the Church is also a strict day of fast, – as an expression of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint. On this day the Church makes remembrance of soldiers, killed on the field of battle, as established in 1769 at the time of a war of Russia with the Turks and the Poles. In some Orthodox cultures pious people will not eat food from a platter, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape on this day. © 1996-2001 by translator Fr. S. Janos.

### **Homily by St. Justin Popovic**

#### **Feast of the Beheading of St John, the Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord**

Today is a little Great Friday, a second Great Friday. For today the greatest man among those born of women, John, the Holy Forerunner and Baptizer of the Lord, is murdered. On Great Friday, people murdered God, crucified God. On today's holy great feast, people murdered the greatest of all men. It is not I who chose to use the expression "the greatest." What are my praises of the great and glorious Forerunner of the Lord, whom the Lord praised more than anyone among men, more than any of the apostles, the Angels, the Prophets, the Righteous Ones, the Sages? For the Lord declared of him: *Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist...* (Matthew 11: 11). In all Creation, there exists no greater praise.

This is why today is a little Great Friday. Consider: senseless people murder the greatest of the righteous. Is he getting in their way? Yes, he gets between the perverse King Herod and the dissolute Herodias. God's Truth, God's immutable Truth gets in the way of the lawless, gets in the way of poor sinners, gets in the way of everyone stupefied by the various passions. Consider: do not Christ's opponents even today still shout "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!?" Even today, do not



those who oppose Christ still demand the head of Jesus of Nazareth? They call for His head, not to mention calling for the head of John the Baptist.

What is this? Could it be that this world has become a madhouse? People do not want God, they do not want the greatest Righteous One in the whole world. Whom do you want? Whom would you prefer? Whom would you set in Christ's stead? With whom would you replace St. John the Baptist? With yourselves?! O moth! O, tiny mortal insects! Yes, when people become maddened by pride, when out of egotistical pride they lose their reason, they have no need of God, they have no need of God's Truth. They declare themselves to be gods. They present their petty, shallow, false likeness of truth as the great and salvific Truth. They declare their shallow, earthly, perishable images of truth to be the greatest of truths: they posit that we do not need Christ's Truth, that we do not want God's Truth. Yes, people blind in intellect and spirit do not see, and do not want to see, that man, true man, cannot manage without God. Why? Because this world is full of Herod's, full of Pharisees. Herod demands the head of John the Baptist, Herod demands the heads of all of the righteous of the world, and Pharisees, the lying scribes, lying sophists of this world, demand the death of Christ, the Incarnate God.

Yes, today's Feast is a second Great Friday. Why? Because there is no greater transgression than that committed on Great Friday and that committed now, when Herod destroys the greatest among those born of women. Why did the Savior exalt the great Saint John the Baptist, as He did no one else? Why? Because, brethren, the Holy Forerunner encompassed within himself, within his person, all of the virtues of Heaven, all of the virtues in all of the Prophets, all of the Apostles, all of the Martyrs, all of the Angels of Heaven, all of the Confessors. Regard: today we glorify the destruction, the beheading of the first Apostle among the Holy Apostles, for the Forerunner of the Lord was the first sent by God to see and to herald to the world the Savior of the world. Long before the Apostle Peter, before the Apostle Nathaniel, before anyone else, he bore witness to and announced God to the world, God Incarnate in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first Apostle to see the Holy Spirit descending from Heaven onto the Lord Jesus, when he baptized Him in the Jordan, announces Him to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world. [John] is also the first Evangelist among the Evangelists. He first announced to the world, and pointed out, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bearer of all Good News for mankind.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Good News of Heaven and earth, God's Gospel for men in this world. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In those few words, the Holy Forerunner expressed the fullness of the Gospels.

Looking toward the East, he said to the entire human race, from Adam to our days, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Kingdom of Heaven? Here it is: the Lord Jesus [come] from Heaven. In Him is the Kingdom of Heaven. Looking toward the West, and seeing people drowning in sins and death, he called to them as well, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He looked to the North and to the South [and saw] – the same people, all slaves to sin, slaves to death, slaves to the devil. To all he announced the glorious, holy and salvific Gospel, "People, repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He was such an Evangelist, someone possessed of great power!

When the Lord set out to preach His Gospel, to preach with power, He took those words as the beginning and end of His Gospel. From that moment, Jesus began to preach and to declare, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17). This is why the Holy Forerunner is the first Evangelist among Christ’s Evangelists.

Today, people have come into contact with an Angel in the flesh, an earthly Angel, and a Heavenly man—St. John the Baptist. It was not only the Old Testament prophet who called the Forerunner the Angel of the Lord, but the Lord Himself said this was an Angel sent to go before Him to prepare the way for Him (cf. Isaiah 40: 3; Matthew 11: 10). Not only a prophet, said the Lord regarding the Baptist, but greater than a prophet—the Angel of the Lord. And people do not want him, and people drive him from this world! Thus, the Holy Forerunner is truly the first Angel in the flesh, the first among those who became the multitude of Angels in the flesh, lamps bringing God’s Light, who lived on earth like Angels of Heaven, and were Angels on earth, and in Heaven remained God’s people, holy people.

Today we glorify the great feast of the first among the Prophets of the New Testament. He announced to men that the Lord Jesus Christ had appeared to the world not only as the Savior, but as the Enlightener and as the Judge of the world. In his hands were both the hatchet and the spade: on the day of the Dread Judgment, the Lord would clean off the earth’s threshing-floor, and would separate the wheat from the chaff, the righteous from the sinners. All of this the great and glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptizer of the Lord had foreseen. Therefore, today we also praise him as the holy New Testament Prophet, killed by the impious, criminal, King Herod.

The Holy Forerunner also received the Lord’s witness to the fact that he was the greatest of those born of woman, because he had become the first of all of the Holy Martyrs of the New Testament. See how he suffered for God’s truth in this world! He suffered joyously! In today’s principal hymn and prayer to him it is said that he went to his death rejoicing, and that he suffered rejoicing. Thus, he became the first example and inspiration to all of the Holy Martyrs of the New Testament, beginning with St. Stephen the Protomartyr and through today. All of the Holy Martyrs go to their death rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ, go to their deaths, knowing that death cannot hold them in its bonds, knowing that death is merely a gate, an open gate through which their holy souls enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. How else, brothers and sisters, can we explain the joy of Holy Great Martyr George’s joy while having his body broken: his bones were being broken on the wheel, and he shouted with joy in the Lord, for he could see Him, could see the Angels of God, standing around Him, and the Angels stopping the wheel. See what joy [he experienced] during those awful tortures! And the Holy Great Martyr stands up whole and unharmed before the godless Emperor Diocletian. The first one to reveal that holy joy of martyrdom had been St. John, the Holy Forerunner and Baptizer of the Lord... <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/39103.htm>