# 2026-09-09: St John in the Liturgical Texts [St John the Baptist - Miramar, FL]

## St. John the Baptist in the Liturgical Texts

### Feasts and Commemorations of St. John the Baptist

1. Month of Kiahk
   - 1st Sunday: Annunciation of the Birth of St. John the Baptist
   - 4th Sunday: Birth and Circumcision of St. John the Baptist
2. Annunciation of the Birth of St. John the Baptist
   - Thout 26 (October 6)
3. Nativity of St. John the Baptist
   - Paouna 30 (July 7)
   - Exactly 6 months before January 7, the Nativity of Christ
   - It is rare for us to celebrate the birth of a saint - only St Mary and St John. Because their births were announced, and because their birth signaled the beginning of the fulfillment of our salvation!
4. Theophany
   - Tobe 11 (January 19)
   - Veneration for St. John is Prayed on the water before the Midnight Praises and Lakkan
5. Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist
   - Thout 2 (September 12)
6. Appearance of the Head of St. John the Baptist
   - Meshir 30 (March 9)
7. Appearance of the Bodies of St. John the Baptist & Elisha the Prophet
   - Paone 2 (June 9)
   - You can see them in the monastery of St Macarius

## Titles of St John Used in the Liturgy

For most of the hymns pertaining to St John, they focus around his various titles. So we'll go through each title and this will give us an understanding of the text of the hymns and responses pertaining to St John.

### The Greatest Among Those Born of Women

St. John is the Greatest Among those Born of Women. This is the title given to him by the Lord Jesus, Himself.

> Consider his table, his manner of life, the height of his soul. For he so lived as though he were in heaven: and having got above the necessities of nature, he travelled as it were a new way, spending all his time in hymns and prayers, and holding intercourse with none among men, but with God alone continually. For he did not so much as see any of his fellow-servants, neither was he seen by any one of them; he fed not on milk, he enjoyed not the comfort of bed, or roof, or market, or any other of the things of men; and yet he was at once mild and earnest. For this reason He said also, "There has not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist."
>
> St. John Chrysostom Homilies on Matthew (37.2)

St John is probably the most important figure in the four Gospels after the Lord Jesus.

Even by the Jews, he was highly regarded. When the Lord asked the Pharisees about "the baptism of John, is it from heaven or from men?" they couldn't answer. Because if they said from heaven, then they would be asked why they don't follow him. But if they said "from men," then - they feared the people "for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed."

When the Apostles were looking for a replacement for Judas, they said "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." (Acts 1:21-22). So they regarded the ministry of John the BEGINNING and an important first step for choosing a witness to Christ.

## The Messenger (Angel)

The placement of St John in our liturgy and hymns is right after St. Mary and the heavenly hosts. Why? Because he is the greatest among those born of women. But also, in our Liturgical Tradition, he is considered to be part of the Heavenly Host.

> Behold, I send My **messenger**, And he will prepare the way before Me. (Malachi 3:1)

Malachi prophesies about St John the Baptist and the word here "messenger" is in Greek □□□□□□ . For this reason, St John is called the Messenger or the Angel. In some icons, he is shown with the wings of an angel. And when we ask for his prayers, we use the word □□□□□□ meaning "intercession" which we only use for St Mary and the Heavenly Orders.

## The Baptist

St. John baptized the Lord Jesus Christ and it is the most significant thing he did in his ministry.

> "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him" (Matthew 3:13)

## The Forerunner

> The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
> ‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
> Make His paths straight.
> Every valley shall be filled
> And every mountain and hill brought low;
> The crooked places shall be made straight
> And the rough ways smooth;
> And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ (Luke 3:4-6 quoting Isaiah 40:3-5)

A forerunner is one who tells the coming of a king. When a king would be coming to the country, he would send a forerunner before him. This forerunner would go ahead and prepare the way and the path. If the road has a bump in it, he flattens it. If the road has a dip in it, he fills it in. If the road is crooked, he makes it straight. He's preparing the path for the king.

St John did this for the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus. And he did it in a spiritual manner - not with physical roads, but with souls. The low were lifted up, the prideful were brought low (like when he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees "Brood of vipers!"), and the crooked and rough were preached a baptism of repentance.

This is the role that the Lord prepared for St John the Baptist. This is the commandment that He received from God for his ministry.

## The Priest, the Son of the Priest

Whenever Abouna raises incense in the Church and he does the "Cross of Incense," he faces the south and raises incense saying "Hail to John, the son of Zacharias. Hail to the priest, the son of the priest."

He is called priest because he is the son of Zacharias, the priest. And in the Levitical priesthood, it was inherited from the father. But his priestly ministry is that which he was called to do - the preaching repentance, hearing confessions and baptizing.

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> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him [6] and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matthew 3:1, 5-6)

### The New Elijah

He came in the spirit of Elijah, in his manner and character (but he is not Elijah, himself).

Just as Elijah spent most of his time on Mount Carmel in the wilderness, so St John spent most of his life in the wilderness of the Jordan. Just as Elijah stood bravely before King Ahab, so St John stood bravely before King Herod. Just as Jezebel incited her husband against Elijah and the prophets, so also Herodias incited her husband against St John.

> "But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

### The Martyr

> So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.” (Matthew 14:10-12)

### Witness to the True Light

> There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. (John 1:6-8)

### Other Titles

1. The Kinsman of Immanuel
2. The Friend of the Bridegroom
3. The Ascetic or the Nazirite

## Hymn of St John the Baptist: ????? ???????

## Introduction of the Hymn

> A proud name [an honorable name] is your name, • O kinsman of Immanuel, • You are great among all the saints, • O John the Baptist.
>
> You are more exalted than the patriarchs, • and more honored than the prophets, • for no one has risen among those born • of women, who is like you.

## Origin of the Hymn

> Come and hear the wise, • the golden tongue Theodosius, • speaking of the honor of the baptizer, • John the Baptist.

Pope Theodosius was Pope from 535 AD to 566 AD. He gave a sermon on the life of St John the Baptist - called the Panegyric (Pan-uh-jee-ric).

"A panegyric delivered by our holy father Apa Theodosius, in every way honoured, the Archbishop of the great city of Alexandria; which he delivered concerning the life of him, than whom none greater hath arisen among those born of women, the promise of heaven, the proclamation of the archangel, the holy offspring of the barren, the priest, the son of the priest, the consolation [adornment] of the wilderness, Jordan's joy, the friend of the true bridegroom, the confessor and witness of Christ, holy John the Baptist, and the forerunner. He delivered this sermon on the day of his holy commemoration, which is the 2nd day of the month of Thoout. And he also spoke in this sermon of Zacharias, his father, and Elisabeth, his mother. He also spoke of Herod who beheaded John and of Philip, the brother of Herod who took his wife from him. And he preached this sermon in commemoration of holy John on the day on which Herod beheaded him, which is the 2nd of the month of Thoout. In the peace of God whose holy blessings be with us all. Amen."

## Words of the Hymn

> What will I call you? • How will I honor you? • What will I compare you to? • O you who are worthy of all honor.
>
> You are the sweetness of fruits, • you are the movement of branches, • you are the blossom on the trees, • planted in the land of the lilies.
>
> O the lily tree, • the choice cypress, • the fragrance that has spread, • is John the Baptist.

This is the part that comes from the panegyric of Pope Theodosius.

"The sweetness of the fruits of the earth, the abundance of the branches of the beautiful trees, the scent of the choice lilies, the sun of righteousness has shed its rays of light on the whole world. The heaven is crowned today with beautiful luminaries. For I see the air being in a state of calm, I also see the waters ebbing and flowing, which signify the Holy Spirit coming upon the waters. I also see all our people that belong to us clad in white today and rejoicing greatly."

It is the feeling that we have today in celebrating this great saint and martyr, St John the Baptist. We celebrate joyfully, coming together in the church.

> You are the morning star, • before the Sun of Righteousness; • you are the rooster that cried out, • before the Light that has shone forth.

The morning star is the star seen right before sunrise. It announces that night is ending and the sun is coming... and then the sun comes out. St John is the morning star that came before the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2). He is the rooster that announced the coming of the morning light - the True Light and the Light of the world.

> O honored forerunner, • in the palace of the kings, • when he willed to cry aloud, • the heart of the King rejoiced.

In the palace of King Herod, when he cried against the sins of King Herod, the heart of the King of Kings rejoiced!

> You are the adornment of the wilderness, • you are the rejoicing of the Jordan, • you are the joy of the beasts, • you are the king of the harts.
>
> All the beasts of the mountains, • the hares that are in the wilderness, • rejoice among themselves, • for you spent your entire time with them.

St John lived his whole life in the wilderness and is the pride of the wilderness, the joy of the beasts and the harts (deer) and the the hares.

> O the promise of Zacharias, • the vow of Elizabeth, • O honorable treasurer, • O precious necklace.
>
> O noetic herald, • whom the King of Glory sent before him, • to prepare His way, • according to the words of Isaiah.

> O forerunner and Baptist, • O witness of the Trinity, • O priceless jewel, • the precious pearl.
>
> O you who saw the Son of God, • stripped of his clothes before him, • the sea saw and fled, • the Jordan went backwards.
>
> O you who witnessed, • before the people of Israel, • that this is the Lamb of God, • who carries the sin of the world.
>
> We bow down at your feet, • O John the Baptist, • ask Christ whom you have baptized, • that he may forgive us our sins.

Witness of the Trinity: At the baptism of Christ, the Father spoke with His voice, the Son was in the water and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove.

"The sea saw it and fled; Jordan turned back." (Psalm 114:3)

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Revision #5
Created 2026-08-22 22:47:51 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba
Updated 2026-10-26 12:29:03 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba