

The Passion of  
Saint John the Baptist  
29 August



### About Saint John the Baptist

Saint John the Baptist has two feasts to himself. One, in June, celebrates his birth, and one, in August, celebrates his death.

John had angered King Herod by denouncing him for marrying his brother's wife Herodias. Herod had him arrested and imprisoned. Herodias was furious and wanted to kill him, but Herod protected John. On Herod's birthday there was a banquet at which Herodias' daughter, Salome, performed a dance which pleased Herod so much he promised to give her anything she asked for. Salome consulted her mother who told her to ask for John the Baptist's head on a dish. King Herod felt that he had no choice but to fulfil his promise and had John the Baptist beheaded.

### How does the life of Saint John the Baptist apply to our lives today?

Saint John the Baptist upset the establishment by speaking the truth and denouncing evil. His mission was to prepare the world for the coming of Christ. We, too, in our day and age, must be prepared to denounce wrongdoing even when it is not easy to do so. Like, John, we must have the courage to stand up for what is right. People's only encounter with Christ, may be through us, so let our words and actions be a reflection of our daily preparation for Christ's coming in glory.

### Collect

O God, who willed that Saint John the Baptist  
should go ahead of your Son  
both in his birth and in his death,  
grant that, as he died a Martyr for truth and justice,  
we, too, may fight hard  
for the confession of what you teach.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Gospel

Mark 6:17-29

### The beheading of John the Baptist

Herod sent to have John arrested, and had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married.

For John had told Herod,

**'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.'**

As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him;

but she was not able to, because Herod was afraid of John, knowing him to be a good and holy man, and gave him his protection.

When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him.

**An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee.**

When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests;

so the king said to the girl, **'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you.'**

And he swore her an oath, **'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.'**

She went out and said to her mother, **'What shall I ask for?'**

She replied, **'The head of John the Baptist.'**

The girl hurried straight back to the king and made her request,

**'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, here and now, on a dish.'**

The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her.

**So the king at once sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head.**

The man went off and beheaded him in prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

**When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.**

### Antiphon

John answered and said: He must increase; but I must decrease.

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## Hymn for the Passion of Saint John the Baptist

1. John the Baptist was the chosen one  
who would prepare the way  
for the coming of Jesus, the Christ,  
upon the earth one day.  
John would be the greatest prophet  
that ever would be born;  
he was sent to warn the people  
**God's Kingdom would soon dawn.**  
He called them to repent of their sins,  
that with pure heart and mind  
when at last Christ would appear on earth  
salvation they would find.

2. John the Baptist always spoke the truth  
and never was afraid  
of the rulers in his time and place  
who put him to the blade.  
For they only were concerned with  
seeking temporal joy and pride,  
**that was their life's only purpose**  
without Christ as their guide.

Herod knew in his own heart that John  
**was speaking God's true Word:**  
**that his marriage to his brother's wife**  
should never have occurred.

3. John the Baptist, may we be like you  
and have Christ light our path;  
every day repenting of our sins  
and being saved from wrath.  
As you did may we let Jesus  
within our lives increase;  
we must leave all fame and fortune  
that our pride may decrease.  
Like you, may we always speak the truth,  
no matter what the cost,  
so with Christ, our Way, our Truth and Life,  
we never will be lost.

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