

From the Divine Office for the Beheading of the Prophet & Forerunner John (Aug. 29)

O thrice-holy Baptist, John, you were beheaded for the sake of the Law of the Lord. With the boldness of the pure, you reproached the unjust king who had transgressed it. Thus the angelic hosts stand in wonder at you, and the choirs of apostles and martyrs glorify you. We venerate your illustrious memory each year, glorifying the Holy Trinity who has crowned you, O blessed Forerunner! (Vespers)

Come, O faithful, let us celebrate together the one who came between grace and the Law, the one who preached repentance to us. After having boldly rebuked Herod in public, he was beheaded. Living forever with the angels now, he intercedes before Christ for our salvation (Orthros)



**TTHIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
AUGUST 27, 2023**



**BEHEADING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
AUGUST 29**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com/Website: olphworcester.org
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Cell: (774) 502-8547
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (3rd)

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka. Haleloueya.

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come. Let us worship and bow down before Christ

People: O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 4) pg. 40

The women disciples of the Lord, having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles: Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing to the world great mercy.”

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg. 15

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 4)

Through your holy birth, O Immaculate One, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the shame of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. Your people, redeemed from the debt of their sins, celebrate your birth crying out to you: “the barren one gives birth to the Mother of God the Sustainer of our life!”

August 29 – Commemoration of the Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

THE GOSPELS DEPICT St John the Baptist as the “forerunner” or herald announcing the immanent coming of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Mark, for example, we read, “*There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*” (Mk 1:7, 8).

John’s work as herald of our salvation was not limited to announcing the beginning of Christ’s ministry in Galilee. Our troparion for today’s commemoration mentions that John baptized the Lord Jesus. Then, it continues, “You have fought for the sake of truth and proclaimed to those in Hades that God who appeared in the flesh has taken away the sins of the world and bestowed his great mercy upon us.” John’s ministry continued after death as he announced to the dead in Hades that Christ’s coming was close at hand.

The Story of John’s Struggle

We read the story of John’s final fight “for the sake of truth” in Mark’s Gospel. “*For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife’*” (Mk 6:17, 18).

John languished in prison because Herod had a superstitious fear of the prophet. He revered John as a holy man but could not bring himself to follow the Baptist’s teachings.

“*Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.’ He also swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom’*” (Mk 6:21-23).

What followed has been frequently retold in literature, music, painting and sculpture. Prompted by her mother, Salome asks for the head of John: “*I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter*” (v. 25).

Because of the oath he had sworn in the presence of his guests, Herod agreed and had John beheaded, making possible the prophet’s ministry in Hades.

Our Observance of John’s Death

Because John, whom the Lord Himself had called the greatest man born of woman, was killed as a result of Herod’s birthday revels, the Byzantine Churches observe today as a strict fast: no parties, no luxury foods, no drink. We see where these things can lead.

A number of popular local customs have arisen to mark this day among various Eastern Christians. People may:

- Avoid eating anything on round plates, since Salome asked for John’s head “*on a platter*” (Mk 6:25). Use bowls instead.

- Avoid eating any round fruits or vegetables (they resemble a head)

- Avoid eating anything that requires use of knives or anything that cuts.

- Avoid eating or drinking anything red (they remind us of blood).

A contemporary way to observe this commemoration might be to fast and pray for those who have died senselessly at the hands of others through terrorism, armed conflicts or senseless violence. Think of them as John’s “companions in suffering.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today Newly baptized **Mattia Anastasia Hattar**, daughter of Eli & Mirna Hattar +**Peter John Solitro (2 yr)**. Requested by Antonio & Karen Solitro and family

Sep 3 **HS Sandra Hanlan**. Requested by Susan Arraje

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by **Antonio & Karen Solitro & family**

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by

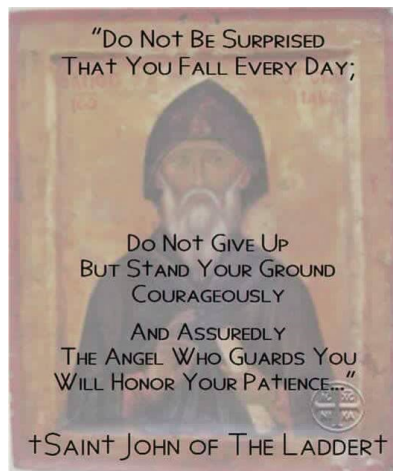
Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$1,219
Candles	\$ 27
Coffee Hr.	\$ 60
Stole	\$ 850
Flowers	\$ 60
Donations	\$1,100
TOTAL	\$3,366



FOOD DONATION BOX

There is a green box in the narthex for food donations. Once a month, we will deliver whatever we collect to a local charity that helps those with food insecurity. Our first delivery was to Mustard Seed Ministries on August 4. Please buy a couple of extra items when you go the grocery store and put them in the box on your way into the church on Sunday. Thank you in advance for your generosity in helping those who need a little extra assistance!



Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.

100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & FAMILY PICNIC

Our 100th Anniversary will be celebrated on **November 4-5**. We will have Great Vespers followed by a banquet on November 4. On November 5, we will celebrate a hierarchal Divine Liturgy followed by lunch in the parish hall. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. More information will be forthcoming. Please contact Fr. Bryan if you would like to help with the planning and preparation for the occasion.

You should have received a letter and form to use if you want to place an ad in the commemorative book. As a reminder, the deadline for submitting ads is **September 1**. **You can use the QR code on the right to submit your ad if you prefer.**

We are looking for donations to offset some of the costs for the anniversary celebration. If you can donate, please let us know.

We are also working on our Family Picnic which will be **September 10**. **We need your help to make the Picnic successful!** Please volunteer to help in some capacity. Too much of the work is being done by too few people. If each of us does a little, no one is overwhelmed.

Our next meeting for both events will be **Wednesday August 30 at 6:30PM**.

Please use the following link or QR code on the left to sign up to volunteer:

www.olphworcester.org/picnic

Picnic Volunteer QR Code



100th Anniversary QR Code



The Vineyard of the Lord (Mt 21:33-42)

THE HOLY LAND IS DESCRIBED in the Torah as “*A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey*” (Deut. 8:8). All of these so-called seven species have figured in Biblical imagery, decorative arts and liturgy, but none more than the vine, the vineyard and the grape.

The prophet Isaiah used the image of a vineyard to describe the condition of Israel in his day, the eighth century BC: “*My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. ... For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant*” (Is 5:1-2, 7).

Isaiah’s imagery reappears frequently in the Scriptures and resonates deeply among believers to this day. The vineyard represents God’s people – Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New – and we continually ask God’s blessing upon it in the words of Psalm 80: “*Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted*” (vv 15, 16). At hierarchical Liturgies the bishop still prays over the people with the words of this psalm.

Trouble in the Vineyard

But all was not right in Isaiah’s vineyard: the crop was not as the landowner expected. “*He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help*” (v. 7). Found wanting, the vineyard would be judged and left desolate. Those who heard Jesus’ parable of the vineyard (Mt 21:33-46) knew well that it echoed Isaiah’s imagery. But the Lord was even more specific in laying the blame for the vineyard’s poor state on the vinedressers. They were the ones who mistreated the landowner’s servants and even his son.

After the Lord cataloged the sins of the vinedressers – beating, stoning, and killing those who were sent to them – He asked His hearers, “*Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?*” (v. 40) He does not depict the landowner as vengeful, but His hearers are quick to see the consequences of the vinedressers’ actions. “*He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons*” (v. 41).

The punch line to this parable is not included in the passage read liturgically. The Lord concluded by saying, “*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it*” (v. 43). The vinedressers will lose control of the vineyard they have mismanaged and others will take their place.

Christ could not have confronted the Jewish leadership in a clearer or more challenging way. The Gospel goes on to say that they got the point: “*Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet*” (vv. 45-46).

The Stone Rejected

In the Gospel Christ tells this parable in Jerusalem a few days before His arrest. It follows on His cleansing of the temple and climaxes the message that He has been proclaiming throughout His ministry: that the Kingdom of heaven is near at hand and that the Kingdom will be accomplished in Him. With that in mind He quotes Psalm 118:22-23, “*Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?*” (v.42)

The Lord Jesus Himself is the stone rejected by the builders, the Jewish leadership, who becomes the chief cornerstone with His death and resurrection. Life in God will depend on a person’s acceptance of Christ, and so He adds “*And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder*” (v.44).

Many of those who witnessed Christ’s crucifixion were alive to see the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The temple was razed to the ground and the high priests and the Sadducees ceased to exist. The Kingdom had been taken from them and a new Israel, the Church, was being erected with Christ as the chief cornerstone.

Prokimenon

Reader: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

People: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: Bless the Lord. O my soul! You are very great indeed, O Lord my God!

People: How great are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Reader: How great are Your works, O Lord!

People: In wisdom You have wrought them all.

Epistle: 1 Cor. 16:13-24

Alleluia Verses

String Your bow, go forth, reign for the sake of truth, meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall lead You wonderfully.

Verse: You loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, your God, anointed You with the oil of joy above Your companions

Gospel: Mt. 21:33-42

Please remember in your prayers: Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Anthony Poti, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, all those affected by the wildfires in Maui, the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, and the people of Ukraine.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Fri. 9.8 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos

Wed. 9.13 6PM-Great Vespers for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Thu. 9.14 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Please plan to join us!