

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

‘BRING ME THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST’

The words above send a shiver through every God-fearing Christian. Aside from Holy Friday, the commemoration of the BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST is the darkest and saddest day on our liturgical calendar.

John was a popular preacher, who captivated crowds that gathered to hear him along the banks of the Jordan River. For a people that longed for the coming of the Messiah, John brought hope and encouragment that the Saviour’s arrival was imminent.

John the Baptist spoke with conviction, which brought about his imprisonment and ultimate death. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee at the time of John’s preaching in the wilderness. A man as evil as his father, Herod Antipas had his own wife up put away, and brought his brother Philip’s wife to live with him in his royal palace. After vehemently denouncing the immorality of Herod and Herodias, John was cast into prison.

John’s earthly life came to an untimely end after a birthday celebration for Herod. Herodias’ daughter Salome, entertained the king and his guests by dancing for them. The pleased ruler promised to reward her with anything she wished, and at the urging and prompting of the wicked Herodias, Salome requested that the head of the Baptist be brought to her. Herod sadly complied rather risk, “losing face” among his guest.

Fittingly, Herod, Herodias and Salome all suffered terrible deaths. After being exiled to Spain by the Roman Emperor for administrative failures in Galilee, Herod and Herodias were killed in an earthquake. Salome met her end by downing.