

# BYZ#KIDS

June 2024

## John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist life,  
Tuesdays for the Forerunner,  
Classroom Connection,  
Chocolate Locusts & Sticky Peanut Recipes,  
Crossword Puzzle, Coloring page,  
Activities, and MORE!





*Christ is Risen!*

*Indeed He is Risen!*

Dear ByziParents,

Have you ever felt a spiritual presence guiding your family? It may sound peculiar, but I believe my family is guided by St. John the Baptist. There are numerous connections. My husband's birthday coincides with the commemoration of the first finding of St. John's head. We were married in St. John's Church and baptized our first three children there. My twins were due on the Feast of his birth, but thankfully, they arrived early. I find solace in praying to him.

There have been numerous instances in my life when I've pondered what St. John the Baptist would do if he were in my shoes. As I sought his intercession through prayer, I discovered that his example was precisely what I needed in those moments.

He is such a brave model of faith; his story is a fascinating example of courage and justice! Many times, we Christians are called to do as St. John did and speak out against the clear outrages that oppose the will of God and are often perpetrated by those who have authority over us. We need to flee into the refuge of our own homes to escape the daily persecution of our neighbors who don't understand our decisions or our relationship with God. We are called to encourage those around us to repent and wash away their sins so they can make a fresh start. Like St. John the Baptist, we need, above all else, to prepare the way of the Lord in the hearts of our children so that they will be ready when He comes.

Enjoy the issue!

*Lynne*



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# i SPY in MY LITTLE ICON



By Kh. Jocelyn Abyad



This month, we look at the life of Saint John the Forerunner in words but also in image. His icon is rich with meaning and tells the story of his life in one image, making this great saint accessible to us all- no matter our age or ability to read! His icon is often found in a place of prominence on our Byzantine Iconostasis, right next to Christ, due to his importance as the final and greatest prophet.

To understand the full message being told to us in this icon, let us first look at the central figure in the icon, Saint John. He wears his hair and beard in messy, long curls showing his ascetic lifestyle. He stands in a dry and barren, rocky desert, his home for most of his life. He is clothed in a camel hair tunic, covered by a himation, or robe, which is green to symbolize his humility and earthly wandering in the desert (rather than red or purple, the colors of royalty).

Upon his back, we see wings which are symbolic of his status as a messenger of God. The scroll in his hand is also the symbol of a prophet, one who speaks with wisdom to share God's message. His staff confirms his role as a prophet and messenger. It boasts a cross at the top of it, reminding us that Saint John always pointed to Christ as our Savior. Saint John looks up to the top left corner of the icon where we see a blue mandorla. From the mandorla, the hand of God extends, blessing him.

Now we turn to the last two elements in the icon at the bottom of the page. If you look closely, you can see an ax in the tree in the bottom right. This same ax and tree are found in the Theophany icon and call to mind Matthew 3:10 which states, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The message of repentance is clear in this scripture and Saint John spent his life preaching about repentance to the people.

Perhaps the most shocking portion of the icon is the head in a chalice in the bottom left of the icon. In many icons of martyrs, the way in which the saint was killed is depicted. In this case, Saint John was beheaded by King Herod. For this reason, the icon includes his path to martyrdom that led him to his eternal reward in Heaven- the loss of his head!

As you now can see, this one icon is full of information and depth about our beloved Saint John the Forerunner. May he intercede for us all!



# TUESDAYS

## for the FORERUNNER



In Eastern Christianity, each day of the week is dedicated to a different theme. Once you learn the commemorations for each day, you can remember to keep them in mind as you say your daily prayers!

<b>MONDAY:</b>	All the Holy Angels
<b>TUESDAY:</b>	Forerunner and Baptist John
<b>WEDNESDAY:</b>	The Cross
<b>THURSDAY:</b>	Apostles & St. Nicholas
<b>FRIDAY:</b>	The Crucifixion
<b>SATURDAY:</b>	The Departed
<b>SUNDAY:</b>	The Holy Resurrection

Did you notice that St John the Forerunner is given his own special day each week?

Every Tuesday is St. John the Baptist Day!  
Here are some special prayers you can say each Tuesday, or anytime you want to commemorate this special saint!

### Troparion (Tone 4)

*O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ, in spite of our eagerness to render you due honor, we fall short when singing your praise. Your glorious birth saved your mother from the shame of barrenness, returned to your father the power of speech, and proclaimed to the world the Incarnation of the Son of God.*

### Kontakion (Tone 3)

*The woman who had been barren becomes fertile and gives birth today to the Forerunner of Christ. He is the greatest and last of the prophets, for standing in the waters of the Jordan River, he placed his hands on Christ whom all the prophets had announced, and in so doing he became a prophet himself, a preacher and a forerunner of the Word of God.*

### From the Akathist to St. John the Forerunner

Saint John, prophet and martyr,  
Thou who was a blessing unto the righteous Elizabeth and a friend of Christ the Lord, teach us to repent that we may also be a blessing unto others and that we may prepare a straight path from this sinful world to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Correct us if we stray from truth, deliver us if we fall into passions, and purify us if we love not our neighbor as Christ has loved us. Baptist John, let us bring forth fruits worthy of repentance — fruits from the barren deserts and fruits from the dark forests which are transfigured only by reconciliation in Christ our God. We thank thee, O voice in the wilderness, for proclaiming the message of salvation unto all people.

Amen



# MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke

"Though the soul is not present a power resides in the bodies of the saints because of the righteous soul which has for so many years dwelt in it, or used it as its minister." St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Why do we venerate the relics of saints who have reposed? In the 7th Ecumenical Council the Church confirmed the veneration of relics as a way to respect the holiness of both the body and soul. Some relics stream myrrh or give sweet smelling scents when discovered. Others perform miracles and blessings on those who venerate them through prayer.

Considered the first proto-martyr in the New Testament, St. John was beheaded by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, because of his influence over the people and his criticism of Herod's unlawful marriage to Herodias. After this his body, which had been discarded, was taken by faithful followers and buried in that same region of Galilee. His head was later recovered (multiple times) and reburied in various places. During the reign of Constantine, his relics were discovered and secretly taken to Emesa until 453 AD. The Church of St John the Baptist in Jerusalem currently houses a fragment of his skull. Other relics of St John are housed in Egypt at the Saint Macarius the Great Coptic Church. Sebastia, in Palestine also houses major relics of St. John. Other churches house portions of his skull and right arm.

A saint as humble and holy as St John the Baptist continues to bless us with miracles even as his relics are shared across the globe. May we look to the Resurrection and life that makes both our souls and bodies Holy in Christ, just as St John.

## Feasts of St John the Baptist

September 23rd – Conception of St. John, January 7th – Synaxis of St. John, February 24th – 1st & 2nd Findings of the head of St. John, May 25th – 3rd Finding of the head of St. John, June 24th – Nativity of St. John, August 29th – Beheading of St. John

*Both icons are written by Julia Hayes. Julia Hayes is a South African born iconographer living in Greece. In addition to painting icons she teaches online iconography courses. [www.ikonographics.net](http://www.ikonographics.net)*







# KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach

## The Life of St. John the Baptist

### 1 Announcement of his conception

The Theotokos had a cousin named Elizabeth. She had been married to one of the temple priests for many years, but they were still without children, which made them both very sad. They prayed that God would hear them and grant their desire for a child. One day, when Zacchariah was praying in the temple, he was amazed to see Gabriel, the Archangel, standing before him!

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has

been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord.

But since he and his wife were considered too elderly to become parents, Zechariah had difficulty believing the angel and asked for a sign to know that this was true. The angel replied,

Luke 1:20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens,

because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

And so it was that Elizabeth was found to be expecting a baby, and Zechariah was still unable to speak.

### 2 The Visitation of Elizabeth with the Theotokos

When Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, she was visited by her cousin Mary, the Theotokos, who had just learned that she was expecting her own baby. Remember that the Archangel Gabriel, the same one who had announced the coming of John to Zechariah, had also announced the coming of the Lord to Mary and told her of Elizabeth’s good news. When the Theotokos arrived at Elizabeth and Zechariah’s house, a marvelous thing happened.

Luke 1:41-42 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!



### 3 Birth story: His Name is John

So when the time came, Elizabeth delivered her son, and on the eighth day, they brought him to the Temple to be circumcised as was their custom, and on that day, he would receive his name. Elizabeth spoke up, because Zechariah was unable to speak. Because Gabriel had instructed that they name the child John, she declared that this would be his name. But the priests questioned whether she was sure since no one in their family had ever been named that before. At that moment, another marvelous event took place. Zechariah was able to speak!

Luke 1:62-64 Then they made signs to his father to find out what he would like to name

the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment, he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately, his mouth was opened, and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

### 4 Hiding in the wilderness

After the birth of the Savior, the wise men from the east told King Herod about a newborn king, and out of jealousy, he ordered all of the infants who were two years old and younger to be killed. We remember that Joseph was instructed in a dream to take the Theotokos and her Child to Egypt for safety. God also had a plan to protect little John.

The Protoevangelion of James 22:3 And when Elizabeth heard that John was sought,

she took him up into the hills and looked around for somewhere to hide him, but there wasn't a hiding place. Then Elizabeth groaned and said, "Mountain of God, take a mother with her child," because Elizabeth was unable to go up higher. And immediately, the mountain split and took her, and a light shone through the mountain for her. For an angel of the Lord was with them, protecting them.

So it was that the child John and his mother Elizabeth spent the next several years of his life hiding in the desert.

Matthew 3:4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

### 5 John Begins Life as a Missionary

Mark 1:4-5 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

### 6 Baptism of Christ in the Jordan:

Matthew 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

### 7 Pointing Christ out to his followers:

Many people were confused when they first saw Jesus baptizing and John stepping aside. John was eager to set them straight.

John 1:29-31 The next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."

### 8 Public Correction of Herod

King Herod was living a very immoral life and had taken his brother's wife as his own.

Luke 3:18-20 And with many other words, John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. But when John rebuked Herod the Tetrarch because of his

marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done,

Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

### 9 Beheading: Solome's Dance

Herodias hated John the Baptist for criticizing her relationship with King Herod and wanted revenge against him.

Matthew 14:6 But at a birthday party for Herod, Herodias's daughter performed a dance

that greatly pleased him, so he promised with a vow to give her anything she wanted.

At her mother's urging, the girl said, "I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!"

Then the king regretted what he had said; but because of the vow he had made in front of his guests, he issued the necessary orders. So John was beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

### 10 Burial and finding of his head

According to tradition, John the Baptist's head wasn't buried with his body but flung by Herodius into a pile of trash outside King Herod's palace. It was later retrieved by the Holy Myrrhbearer Joanna, who was the wife of the King's steward, was placed in an urn, and given an honorable burial on the Mount of Olives. It was found 300 years later when a Church was being built on the site, and it was the cause of many miracles. Over time, it became forgotten, was buried, was found, forgotten, and found again for a third time when it was ceremonially transferred to Constantinople. Its whereabouts today aren't clear but there is speculation that it could be safely preserved in a reliquary on the island of St. John, off the southern coast of Bulgaria. The stone box containing a skull was marked with the Greek words for "God, save your servant Thomas. To St John. June 24." Because June 24 is the feast of the beheading of St. John and because the bones found there were carbon-dated and are said to have been from a man who lived during the first century somewhere in the Middle East, there is reason to believe these really are the skull bones of St. John the Baptist.



# classroom connection

The ByziClassroom is all about making faithful connections and friendships, and we all know that doesn't always happen within the four walls of a classroom! In this summer vacation edition of the ByziClassroom, we're taking St. John the Baptizer's lead and heading to the river. The River Jordan? Probably a bit of a stretch to take your whole class there, but wouldn't it be fun to make a field trip to the river nearest you together? Pack the life jackets, a snack (maybe skip the locusts), and all your sand toys for a day in the sun together with your ByziClassroom friends!

Not a ByziClassroom member yet? Now is the time to join and start planning your groups for the fall. You can sign up to receive our monthly email by clicking on the icon at [www.byzimom.com](http://www.byzimom.com). This free newsletter comes out monthly and provides you with a lesson plan based on the Byzikids Magazine issue of the month. Using the readily available resources of the magazine as well as a few extra games and ideas, you will receive a two hour lesson plan laid out for you to use in your homeschool co-op, religious education program at your parish or your own living room with a couple of friends. It's all done for you, so it's easy to open and go, but flexible enough to accommodate the various needs of your group. We hope that you will join us!





# Sense-Ability

## Let us be attentive to God's Crea-

When God created us, He made us both body and soul, meaning we are both physical and spiritual beings. We are not like angels that are just spirits. For this reason, when we use our bodies to help us learn, our spirits are changed as well! Have you played with a sensory bin before?

A sensory bin is a small tub or table filled with items that you can touch, smell, taste or make noise with. They typically include items that are all about a particular theme. When we use our senses to help us learn something, it helps our brain to recall the information better.

## St. John the Baptist



St. John the Baptist is the greatest and final prophet and for this reason, his influence and renown stretches throughout the entire world. The icon we see St. John the Baptizer in most often is the icon for Theophany- Christ's baptism in the Jordan River. For this reason, it will come as no surprise that this month's sensory bin is using water! What may take you by surprise is the flowers included, but St. John's influence is so wide that there is even a flower named after him! The flower is called St. John's wort and it is a medicinal plant with beautiful yellow flowers that has been used in Europe since ancient times. The plant typically blooms around the time of the feast of St. John in late June.

While some of you may be able to find fresh blooms of St. John's wort in your yard this month, any flower will work for this activity. A gifted bouquet that is beginning to wilt and has lost its original splendor or a collection of vibrant wild flowers from your latest nature walk are great options as well. To begin, fill your sensory bin or container with water. Next, take some of your flowers and trim the stems off so that just the buds remain. A variety of colors, shapes and sizes will work best. Lay the flowers gently on the water and they will float on top! Loose petals can be sprinkled around the whole buds. You can keep some full stems of flowers as well to arrange in vases, watering cans or baskets as well as placing them in your hair by weaving a crown!

As we smell the sweet fragrance of the flowers and observe their beauty, thank God for the sweet and true message of St. John, pointing us to Christ. As you splash in the water, remember the water of the Jordan River that Christ was baptized in by the hands of St. John. As you observe the short span of the life of a flower, recall St. John's martyrdom for Christ. All of our senses point us back to Christ and His eternal truths!





# Zechariah's Silence

In the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 11:11), Jesus tells his disciples that the Forerunner and Baptist John is the greatest man who was ever born! He was created by God to perform a unique task, one that would occur only once in the history of mankind. John was created to be the Forerunner, that is, the one who would be born into the world just before Christ in order to prepare the world for His coming.

John's parents needed to be very special people to raise such an important son! They had longed for children for many years and had almost given up hope when an angel appeared to Zachariah as he was tending to the duties of his office of temple high priest. The angel told him,

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth..."

Because they were well past the age of expecting children, Zachariah had a hard time believing the angel's words, so the angel told him that as a sign, he would be unable to speak until the child was born. What a difficulty that must have been to explain to Elizabeth! What a long nine months of silence it must have been for these parents! It was at the baby boy's circumcision when he was to receive his name that his father's mouth was opened at last as he said, "His name is John!"

Because John the Baptist was born just months before Jesus, his mother ran away to hide him in the desert during the persecution of the Holy Innocents. Zachariah would become silent once again, this time voluntarily, and according to a second-century text, the Gospel of James, he would lose his life rather than give away the whereabouts of his wife and precious newborn son to the authorities.

As you think about the faithful parents of the greatest man who was ever born and how they remained silent all those months to hear the voice of God in their hearts, let's make these little "reminders" in their honor, and as you do, try and see if YOU can speak with one of these sticky treats in your mouth!

## St. Zachariah's

### Sticky Peanut Butter Treats

- 1 c peanut butter, chunky or smooth is fine; also, any other nut butter may serve as a substitute, like almond, cashew or sunflower butter.
- ½ c powdered sugar
- ½ c sweetened condensed milk
- 1 c. chocolate chips

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Shape into balls and enjoy!





# St. John's Wort Miracle Oil

*Psalm.103, the creation psalm that we chant at the beginning of vespers tells us that God gave us the animals,...*

## **"...And Plants to Serve Man's Needs"**

Keep an eye out for these cute little yellow flowers that may just be starting to appear in gardens and fields near you:



## **These are called St. John's Wort.**

Wort isn't the same as wart...it's an old word for herb or flower. They are cheerful little yellow flowers that are named for St. John the Baptist because, in most areas, the flowers tend to appear around his feast day, June 24. You can pick these little yellow treasures and put them all into a clean jar.

When you have enough (what's enough?...any amount will do), cover them with olive oil and put the jar in a sunny window, shaking it well every day, and wait for the little miracle. After a few days, the oil in the jar begins to turn a brilliant red!

The blood-red color reminds us of St. John's martyrdom for the cause of the sanctity of marriage...remember how he urged King Herod to repent from the sin of adultery? St. John gave his life for speaking the truth of God's will to the King, even when it was difficult for him to do so. When we see the red color appear, we should also think about the saving Blood of Christ, which washes and heals. Isn't it wonderful how God allows miraculous things to happen all around us every day if we would only stop and notice them?

We can use the oil we are steeping now to make a healing salve to use for the coming winter season. For now, the oil is wonderful as it is for things like bug bites, muscle fatigue, anxieties, and all the little aches and pains of childhood.

## **Saintly Salve**

Once the infusion we made has turned a wonderful, deep red it will be ready for us to use to make a simple, and helpful salve. To make it, we strain and measure our beautiful, red oil to see how much we've got, then we put about one-fourth of that amount of grated beeswax with it in a saucepan and slowly melt everything together on the stove over low heat.

When it is melted, we take it off the heat and add a teaspoon or so of raw honey to the mixture (honey is known for its antiseptic properties and adds nicely to the smell of the salve!) and stir to combine. We then pour the salve into a container with a tight-fitting lid to keep it until we need it. It is the very best winter skin moisturizer! In our house, we have found that this salve usually heals little hearts and minds when it is put on scrapes or injuries and that there is much more peace of mind for the little patient who has made use of it! Truly miraculous indeed!





# Caught You Listening

Khouria Sylvia Dorham

**JUNE 2, 2024**

○ **Gospel: Matthew 4: 18-23**

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus calling his first disciples: two sets of brothers. Unscramble their names and match each to his brother.

OHJN EDWARN REETP SMEAJ \_\_\_\_\_  
AND \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_



**JUNE 9, 2024**

○ **Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33**

Recorded in today's Gospel is part of a long teaching of Jesus known as:

\_\_\_ E \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ O \_\_\_ O \_\_\_  
E \_\_\_ O U \_\_\_

FILL IN THE BLANKS. THE VOWELS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR YOU.





**JUNE 16, 2024**

**Gospel: Matthew 8: 5-13**

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that we might be surprised at some of the people in heaven with us. He also mentions we might be surprised who ISN'T in heaven.

Answer the clues to find out what kind of man surprised Jesus by his faith.

Propel a boat with an oar: \_\_\_\_\_

Opposite of woman \_\_\_\_\_

1/100th of a dollar \_\_\_\_\_

Opposite of me \_\_\_\_\_

Prefix that means 'again' \_\_\_\_\_

Opposite of 'off' \_\_\_\_\_



**JUNE 23, 2024**

**Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1**

Today's Gospel is full of numbers and quantities. Match the correct amounts.

How many demoniacs?	more than one
How many could pass the tombs?	all
How many swine?	2
How many herdsmen?	2
How many cities are mentioned?	an entire herd
How much of the city came to meet Jesus?	none



**JUNE 30, 2024**

**Gospel: Matthew 9: 1-8**

In today's Gospel, Jesus is in his hometown and he has a special message for the paralyzed man the townspeople bring to him. The message applies to us, too! Unscramble each word to read what Jesus said.

"eakT rhtae, ym ons; uroy ssni rea gfoveirn."





A RECIPE from ByziMom.com June 24

# St. John the Baptist Chocolate Locusts



*Scripture tells us that our dear friend St. John the Baptist fasted in the desert from his childhood in order to prepare for his life of preaching by eating wild honey and locusts. Now, our family loves raw honey and eating that is a treat, but eating locusts?*

*Well, yes! Locusts are a treat here, too! Not the real insects, of course, but ones made of chocolate!*

*To make these, we found some really nice candy molds from Etsy and Amazon that are made in the shape of crickets, but any bug shaped molds will do!*

## INGREDIENTS

- Melting Chocolate
- Crispy rice cereal



## PREPARATION

We just melt some chocolate, either in a double-boiler on the stove or in the microwave, stir in some puffed rice cereal, and fill the molds!

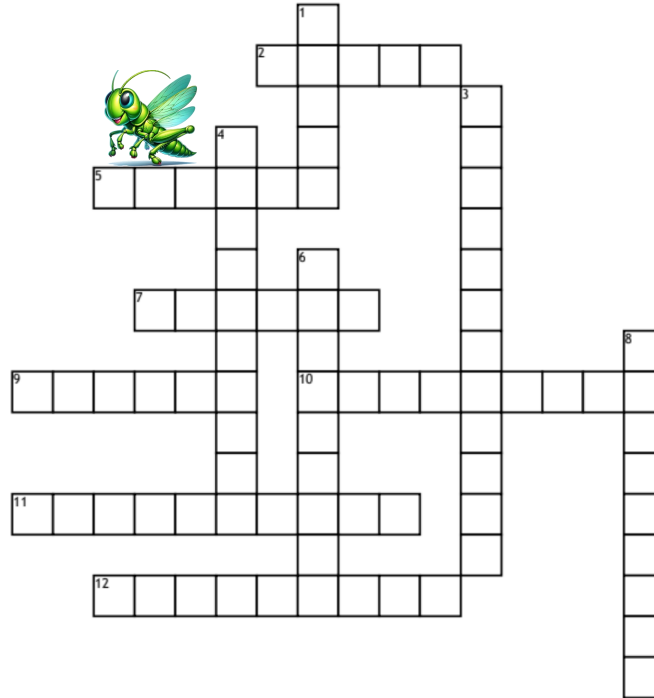
When they harden, you can pop them out and munch on some crispy locusts, just like St. John the Baptist





39	16	21	27	27	21	16	74	37
C	R	O	S	S	W	O	R	D
68	19	37	37	34	15			
P	U	Z	Z	L	E			

# John the Baptist

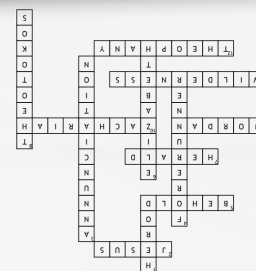


## ACROSS

2. John the Baptist's cousin
5. John the Baptist said \_\_\_\_\_, the Lamb of God- then Andrew started following Jesus
7. John the Baptist is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus because he told everyone about Jesus
9. John baptized Jesus in the river \_\_\_\_\_
10. John the Baptist's father
11. He lived in the \_\_\_\_\_ - not in the city
12. John baptized Jesus- this feast is called \_\_\_\_\_

# DOWN

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Antipas had John killed because he preached the truth
3. Mary visited her cousin (mother of John) after the visit of Gabriel, called the \_\_\_\_\_
4. John the Baptist is also called John the \_\_\_\_\_
6. John the Baptist's mother \_\_\_\_\_
8. John's mother's cousin: The most holy \_\_\_\_\_, Mary





# Once Upon a SAINT

by Rebecca O'Loughlin

## Servant of God, Ragheed Aziz Ganni



My dearest children, in Iraq only 5% of people are Christian. Most of these Christians belong to the ancient Catholic rite of Chaldea. Mar (which means “Bishop” or “Saint”) Thomas and Mar Thaddeus, Apostles of Christ, are considered the primary missionaries of Chaldea. The Chaldean Church has been heavily persecuted, and its saints are made up of martyrs who witness to Christ with their lives. Over the years, the Chaldeans have been forced to leave their native country...to the point that there are more Chaldeans in the United States than anywhere else in the world. Today’s story will highlight one of these Chaldean Christians who, despite many other opportunities, willingly chose to go back to Iraq and be a Christian witness in his hometown.

Not so long ago, on January 20, 1972, a baby boy was born in Mosul, Iraq, which is in the Plain of Nineveh. Ragheed was from a very religious Chaldean family. He had several brothers and sisters and many cousins that lived nearby. Ragheed loved life, and loved playing soccer with his brothers and cousins.

Ragheed was 21 when he graduated at the University of Mosul with a degree in Civil Engineering. While studying bridges and roads, he thought hard about a calling he heard from God to become a priest.

“I think I should not build regular structures,” Ragheed told his friends, “I will become a priest, and help build up the Church.”

“You will not be welcome as a Chaldean priest.”

“I know. And I must serve Iraq two years before I enter seminary. But this is what I am meant for. I will say yes to God.”

In 1996, the seminary in Mosul sent Ragheed to Rome, to study at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas on a scholarship from Aid to the Church in Need. He stayed with the Irish College. The Irish were quick to make the young seminarian one of their own, lovingly calling him “Paddy the Iraqi.” He was known for his good humor. Ragheed became fluent in Italian, French and English as well as speaking Aramiac and Arabic. Thanks to playing soccer with his brothers and cousins, Ragheed held his own with the Irish seminarians, and today the seminarians have a “tournament” every year to win the prize of the “Ragheed Cup.”

As Ragheed’s friendship with the Irish seminarians



grew, he spent his summers working on an island in county Donegal. The Irish loved him so much that the Irish Catholic Church wanted to give him a parish on the Emerald Isle when he was ordained. But Ragheed insisted that his duty lay at home in Iraq. While in Rome, Ragheed worked with the sick and homeless, and brought meals to those in need...including many Iraqi Christians and Muslims who fled the Islamic terrorists of their native country.

Fr. Ragheed was ordained a priest in Rome on October 13th, 2001. He was 29 years old. With tears in his eyes, he told his friends, "today, I have died to self." He was to live completely for Christ.

Fr. Ragheed returned home after getting his licentiate, despite the protests of friends. Iraq was becoming increasingly unstable and Christians were being killed daily. But Fr. Ragheed was willing to die for the faith in order to witness to Christ and serve his countrymen.

Fr. Ragheed's parish was attacked many, many times, and he described the situation as "worse than hell." When a grenade was thrown into the Church a few feet from his teenage sister and she survived, Father found courage: "For me and my community, my sister's wounds were a source of strength so that we, too, may bear our cross."

Father Ragheed said: "The terrorists want to end our lives, but the Eucharist gives us life. When I hold the cup of the Eucharist in my hands, I say: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I feel His power overwhelm me. I hold the cup in my hand, but He is the one who holds me and us all, defying the terrorists and making us united in His boundless love."

One sunny morning, on June 3rd, Fr. Ragheed visited his father and mother. He brought a recent passport photograph of himself.

"Mamma, this is for my funeral, so it will not be a worry for you." Fr. Ragheed handed the picture to his mother.

"You are naughty!" Mamma replied to her smiling son, but he kissed her and his papa, and said goodbye. She remembered that Fr. Ragheed once said to her, with a smile in his eyes, "Mamma, if I die now or I die in 10 years, there is always a death. If they cut my throat with a knife, at the beginning it will hurt badly, but then I will feel nothing more."

Fr. Ragheed celebrated the Eucharist later that evening. After Eucharist, he left the Church with four friends: his

cousin subdeacon Yousef, subdeacon Gassan, and subdeacon Isho'a and his wife, Bayan. They got into their car and began to drive away.

Four masked gunmen with rifles stepped into the street and stopped the car. They yanked Bayan (Isho'a's wife) from the car and the men were told to get out too.

The gunmen yelled angrily: "How many times did we tell you to close the church? We told you not to pray here, you stupid priest! Why didn't you listen to us?!"

Fr. Ragheed replied quietly but firmly, "How can I close the House of God?"

"You will convert to Islam, or we will kill you!"

Fr. Ragheed shook his head "no" and was shoved to the ground. Catching Bayan's eyes, Fr. Ragheed motioned for her to run away. She ran a little way and watched from a distance, as the gunmen shot Fr. Ragheed and Subdeacon Yousef.

Bayan swallowed a sob and offered a prayer as she watched her husband and Subdeacon Gassan run to help the two victims. Both were promptly shot as well.

The funeral was held on June 4th, 2007 and was attended by thousands of people.

Declared a Servant of God along with his three companions, Fr. Ragheed was a man of holiness and intense faith. On earth, Fr. Ragheed had a loving heart not only for persecuted Christians, but also for the homeless, families, children, and everyone who needed him. Fr. Ragheed's ability to help in Heaven is even greater than it was on earth. In England a newborn baby boy wasn't breathing, and his heart was beginning to fail. At the moment when the baby's father - who was very scared - prayed to Fr. Ragheed for help, the baby boy immediately took a breath, and started screaming (we don't always think of screaming as a good thing, but it meant that the baby was breathing again, and very annoyed by all the poking and prodding from the doctors!).

Prayer For the Cause of Fr. Ragheed Ganni

Your servant and priest, Fr. Ragheed Ganni, was given as a gift to Your faithful, and by Your grace, was found worthy to endure a martyr's death. I beseech You, Lord, to grant this petition through the intercession of Your beloved martyr. (mention your request) Help me to imitate Fr. Ragheed in giving my life to You in love, so that one day I might be worthy to attend the heavenly banquet. Amen.



# CHOIR PRACTICE



By Sylvia Dorham

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

Chorus: God likes to get us read-y for what He's a-bout to do by send-ing some-one  
to us whose words we know are true. He sent us John the Bap-tist to  
make us all a-ware that Christ has come, God the Son. Peo-ple! Get read-y!

### Verse 1

And John said:

Stop! Re-center!  
Let God be boss of you  
The world is changing quickly  
God is here to rescue you!

### Verse 2

And John said:

Get right! Don't pause!  
Fix your attitude!  
God is here among us  
And there is no time to lose!

### Verse 3

And John said:

Not me. Not me.  
Don't look to me at all.  
I'm just the one to warn you  
And it's time you heard the call!

### CHORUS

### CHORUS

### CHORUS:

God likes to get us ready  
For what he's about to do  
By sending someone to us  
Whose words we know are true  
He sent us John the Baptist  
To make us all aware  
That Christ has come  
God the Son  
People! Get ready!

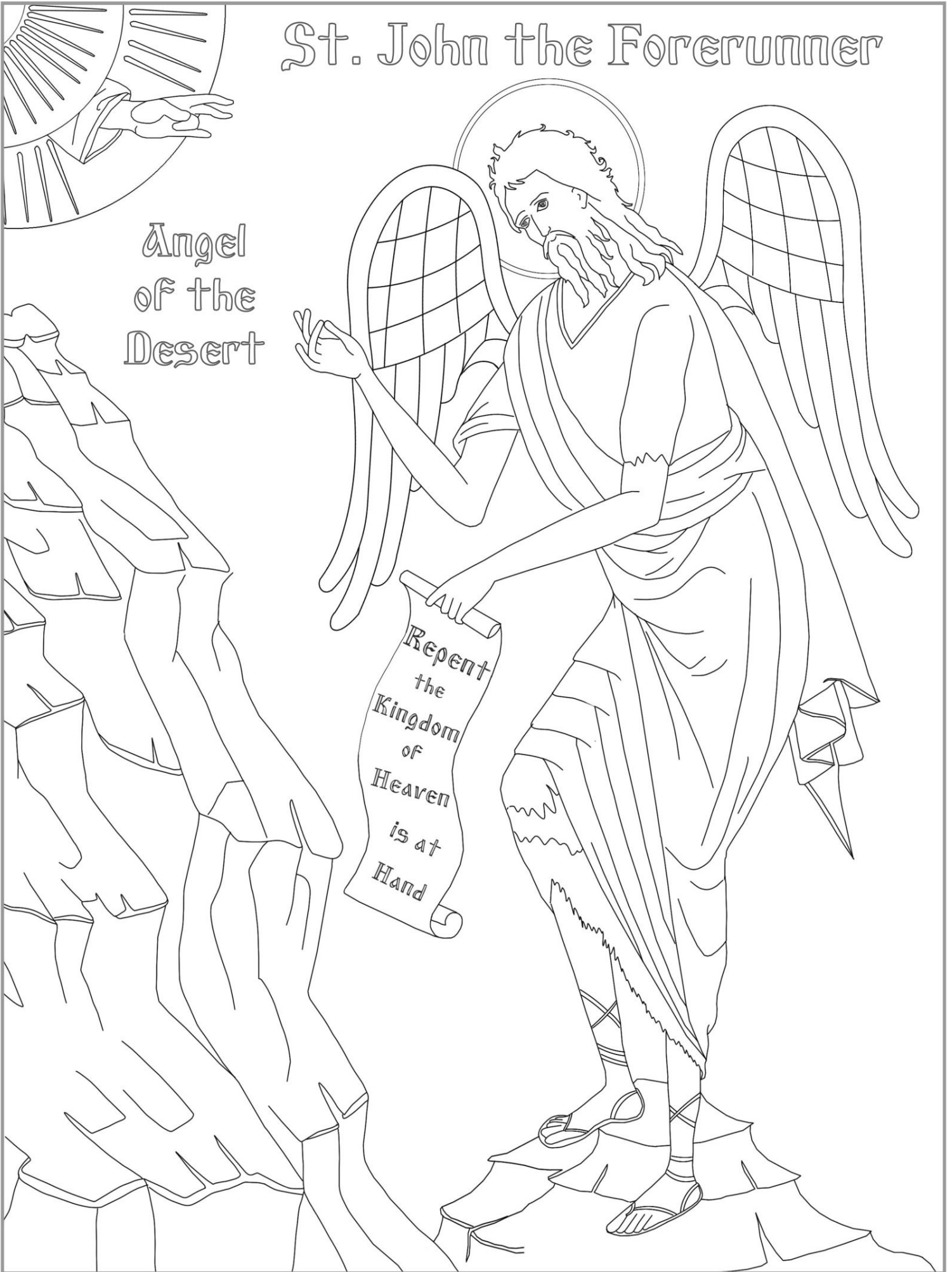
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Scan  
To  
Listen



# St. John the Forerunner

Angel  
of the  
Desert







## June Activities Calendar



Scan the QR code to see the links for the activities

This month is filled with so many fun and interesting things to do!

Visit the Activities Index on the ByziKids page at ByziMom.com for all the links!

<https://www.byzimom.com/byzikids-magazine-extras>

June 1

**The Entry of Christ into Egypt**

- See the June 2023 Issue!
- Learn the song: "The Restoration of Egypt: For Wadamoun"
- Make Christ's Entry into Egypt Handprint Cookies
- Color amlcon of Syrian Fathers in the Coptic Style!



June 22

**Last All Souls Saturday (Eastern Paschalion)**



June 29

**Sts. Peter & Paul**

- Check out the ByziKids Magazine Archives for the
- June 2019/Sts. Peter & Paul Issue!
- Make a Byzantine Church Shoebox Diorama
- Learn the Hymn for Sts. Peter & Paul



June 23

**Pentecost (Eastern Paschalion)**

- Pentecost Windsock Craft
- Pentecost Word Search, Maze, I Spy, & Coloring page!



June 2

**Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (Eastern Paschalion)**

- Make Photina's Eggs for Brunch



June 24

**The Nativity of St. John the Forerunner**

- Learn how to gather St. John's Wort and Make St. John's Wort Oil & Salve
- Make St. John the Baptist Crispy Chocolate Locusts
- Get the St John the Baptist Coloring Page
- Learn the S-A-I-N-T Song!



June 13

**Feast of the Ascension (Eastern Paschalion)**

- We have so many things to do! Make Armenian Rice Pudding, Put on the Play by Khouria Sylvia, and get all the printables!



June 30

**Sunday of All Saints (Eastern Paschalion)**

- Check out the ByziKids June 2020/Summer Saintly Celebration Issue\*\*\*
- Plan to Throw an All Saints Day Saintly Celebration Party!
- Learn the S-A-I-N-T Song!



June 27

**St. David of Thessalonika**

- Make St. David of Thessalonika Almond Bites
- Get the St. David of Thessalonika Maze

