

This such powerful, firm love of God the Father, Who is sending his Beloved Son to die for the world to live, St. John the Baptist is showing us today. His entire life, his preaching and his martyrical death are nothing other than a holy finger, which points with absolute firmness and certainty to the Lamb of God, who is carrying the sin of the world.

How defenseless we become, when - instead of tasting and being satiated with Him, the Lamb of God, in the divine Eucharist, where He is offered edible and drinkable, instead of our life witnessing that we are in the embrace of such a loving caring Father, who feeds us with the Body and Blood of his Son-we present a perverted God, a tyrannic God. And so we leave some brothers of ours thirsty for paternal loving care, like the philosopher Chartre, justifiably complaining: my soul was seeking a loving caring father. And they, the Christians of our age, showed me a big boss” .

Archim. E. T.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2018 SYNAXIS OF JOHN THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET, BAPTIST, & FORERUNNER**, *Afterfeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ , Cedd, Bishop of Scotland, Fursey, Abbot of Lagny*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** *Plagal of the Second Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Ninth Orthros Gospel*

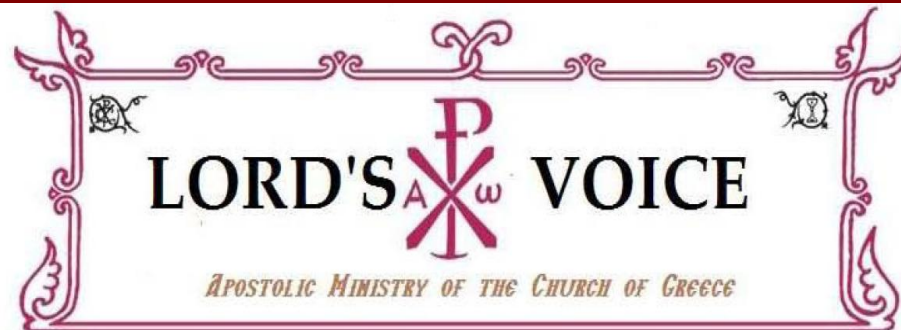
**EPISTLE READING:** *Acts 19:1-8*

**GOSPEL READING:** *John 1:29-34*

**NEXT SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2018 SYNAXIS OF JOHN THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET, BAPTIST, & FORERUNNER**, *Afterfeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ , Cedd, Bishop of Scotland, Fursey, Abbot of Lagny*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-13*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 4:12-17*



66<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

JANUARY 7 2018

PAMPHLET # 1 (3371)

## THE MOST EMINENT OF PROPHETS

The feast today, of the greatest Saint after the Most Holy Theotokos. He is celebrating who does not need our own praises, since Christ Himself glorified him with the words: “Truly I tell you, a greater one among men has not appeared than John the Baptist” (Mt. 11:11). And on the day of his memory, the Church selects a passage from the Gospel of Saint John the Theologian, who served a faithful disciple of his. In this small passage from the Gospel the entire work of Saint John the Baptist is summarized in a wonderful way.

### The work of the Forerunner

What is this majestic work? In a gathering of people, who were gathered by his stirring preaching and the even more awakening and more bright ascetic example of his life, a certain “Forerunner” comes. And John pointing to him, reveals his identity to them.

Yes. It sounds simple. But this is the greatest and most saving revelation that ever occurred to humanity. It refers to a worldwide benefaction, which only the champion of obedience to the will of God is able to offer. Only he, who shed so many ascetic sweats and so many tears of prayer, is able to be honored with

## The Gospel According to John 1:29-34

At that time, John 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, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

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such a high mission. Only he, who is ready even down to blood to champion for the Truth, is able to seal his witness with such validity.

And what is the identity of the Foreigner whom the Forerunner reveals to us? With his hand that touched his Head during his Baptism, St. John points to him and tells us that He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. With these words, the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied him. "He is", he says, "the Sheep, who came to be led voluntarily to slaughter for the salvation of the world. And he will go to slaughter, without even opening his mouth, speechless, just as the sheep stands speechless before him whom shears it." (Is. 53:7 – 8).

### Both Lamb and Son of God

And this voluntary victim, the Lamb of God, is not simply a human or some Angel that is sent. He is, as the Precious Forerunner witnesses, the Son of God. Aside from a human, aside

from a son of the Virgin Mary, he is also Son of God. He is also God in his essence. For this reason- the Forerunner continues - whereas in his human nature it seems that he's coming after me, since Christ was younger than he by six months, according to his divine nature he is very much before me and is incomparably brighter and glorious than I.

And so that we don't think that Saint John is speaking favorably about Christ or being excessive, because probably many people knew that they also had a blood relationship (they were second cousins), for this reason, he stresses it to us twice: "I did not know him". Meaning that he had not been informed and assured that He is the Only Begotten Son of God, the Savior of the world. He recognized Him with absolute certainty, only after God-who sent him to baptize "in water"-informed him: on Him whom you will see the Holy Spirit descending and standing on him with a form of a dove, He it is who is baptizing with the Holy Spirit. And I, concludes Saint John, truly saw the Holy Spirit descending and standing on him. And I have given my witness that He is the Son of God.

### Speechless victim or boss?

What consoling words. Certainly they are the most consoling words which the ear of man would await to hear: God Himself is descending to the earth, not in order to tyrannize. Not in order to judge the world. Not as a God of revenge. Not as "fearful Lord, a great king upon the earth". He's coming in order to save the world. He's coming to be sacrificed as a sheep, who is going to the slaughter speechless, carrying all the sins of the world. He's coming in order to show his infinite love to his children.