



74<sup>th</sup> Year

January 4, 2026

Pamphlet #1 (3788)

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## **THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Mark 1:1-8)**

### **The Forerunner of Christ**

*The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

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### **SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER AND THE PATH OF HUMBLE-MINDEDNESS**

Today's Gospel passage refers to the work which Saint John the Forerunner was called by God to perform – a mission that consisted primarily in preparing and cultivating people so that they might accept the message of the coming Kingdom of God.

For this reason, the Evangelist Mark, in the above passage, cites two very important verses from the Old Testament that characterize John the Forerunner and describe his work: "I am sending," says the prophet Malachi, "my messenger ahead of you, to prepare your way" (Malachi 3:1). This messenger, the herald of the word of God, is John the Forerunner. And the next verse is directly connected with the previous one: "A voice," says the prophet Isaiah, "cries out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths for Him to pass" (Isaiah 40:3). This refers to the preaching of repentance by the Forerunner.

Saint John the Forerunner, immersed in the love of God, bathed in the light of faith, devoted to asceticism, fasting, and prayer, wore garments made of camel's hair, a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts, that is, tender shoots of wild desert plants, and wild honey produced by wild bees.

### **Humble-mindedness as a way of ministry**

Of course, apart from the above, what was of decisive importance for his ministry in preparing the way of the Lord was his deep humble-mindedness, an all embracing and fundamental virtue. For a person who does not live with humble-mindedness cannot trust God nor serve Him selflessly. Likewise, such a person cannot offer essential service to their fellow man nor help them come to know the truth of God, the life, and the evangelical ethos that the Church proposes. The egotist usually preaches himself; he is possessive and manipulative, self loving and vain.

### **Humble-mindedness as imitation of God**

John proclaims the majesty of the Lord's divinity and points out that he is not worthy to bend down and untie the strap of Christ's sandals. This ethos is also taught to us by the Lord Himself, who clothed Himself in humility, took on human nature, and united it with His divinity so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life (John 3:15). Our God is a God of humility. He girds Himself with the towel, the servant's

apron, just as He did at the Mystical Supper, and He washes our feet, He cleanses us, He serves us, He gives us the example of how we should behave toward our fellow men (John 13:4–17). In this way, the love of God is linked with His humility. And God is humble because He truly loves. And He truly loves because He sacrifices Himself, offering Himself “for the life and salvation of the world” (Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great).

## **Humility and service**

If John the Forerunner had not embraced the abyss of Christ’s humility, he would not have been able to faithfully serve the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. In a similar way, every servant of the Church, every believer, if they wish to become a forerunner of Christ- that is, to prepare the coming of God into their own life and into the life of the body of the Church – must live in the spirit of evangelical humble-mindedness, which, of course, has nothing to do with feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, or the like. Christian humble-mindedness is a sign of spiritual health and balance, for it fills the person with the Spirit of God, with peace, love, discernment, patience, bravery, and wisdom.

May the “most venerable of the prophets,” John the Forerunner, inspire us in our struggle to live humble-mindedness in Christ, as service to God and to our fellow men; as modesty and prudence, according to the apostolic exhortation: “Not to think of oneself more highly than one ought to think, but to think with sober judgment” (Romans 12:3).

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Archimandrite N. K.

**WITH ALL OUR HEART, WE WISH FOR YOU IN 2026, FULLNESS  
OF JOY AND PEACE, AN ABUNDANCE OF HOPE, AN  
INEXHAUSTIBLE STRENGTH OF OPTIMISM AND CREATIVITY IN  
THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WORDS AND DEEDS OF  
LOVE FOR OUR FELLOW MEN AND FOR ALL CREATION!**

January 4, 2026: Sunday before Theophany

Synaxis of the 70 Holy Apostles; Saint Theoktistos the Venerable; Saint Nikephoros the Leper (+ 1964)

Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 8 – Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8  
– Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

NEXT SUNDAY: January 11, Sunday after Theophany  
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 – Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

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