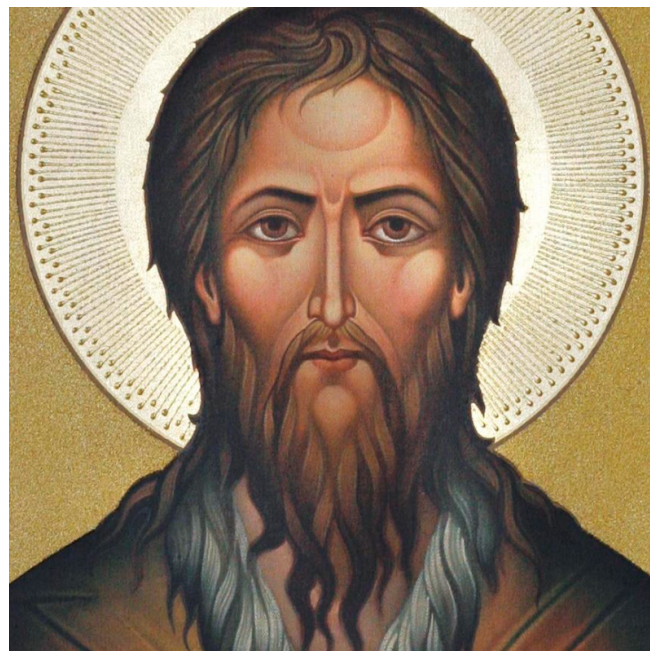


Nativity of John the Baptist

DATES: FIRST CENTURY | FEAST DAY: JUNE 24

In the Gospels, John, a kinsman of Jesus through their mothers, preached repentance and baptized to prepare for the Messiah's coming. This feast marks his exceptional birth to the aged priest Zechariah and the equally aged and barren Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel announces his birth in a vision to Zechariah, who hesitates in believing and is struck mute until eight days after John's birth. Then, Zechariah, in a beautiful canticle that ends the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, proclaims that John "will be called prophet of the Most High." John's eventual beheading is commemorated with an Aug. 29 feast. A patron saint of Canada and Jordan, John is also the patron of Florence and the Knights Hospitaller of St. John.



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