

SUNDAY AFTER THE  
THEOPHANY/EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD



*Icon of Saint John the Baptist*

***John the Baptist and Forerunner***

For the Church, John was a prophetic and tragic figure. He is called the 'Baptist' because he baptized those who came to him; he is called the 'Forerunner' because he went before Christ and prepared His way, making His paths straight, in accordance with the words of the prophet: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness ... make his paths straight (Mark 1:3). In the Old Testament, he is prophesied as "the voice of him that cries in the wilderness," in the passage from Isaiah quoted above. In other texts, he is referred to as 'the voice of the Word', 'the lamp of the Light', 'the friend of the Bridegroom', 'the morning star before the Sun'.

John began his work at the age of 30, in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (27 or 29 AD). To begin, he journeyed

around the southern part of Judah, near the river Jordan, preaching and prophesying. The central theme of his preaching was repentance: he called upon men to repent and to change their ways of thinking, so that they would be ready to receive the teaching of Christ, their Savior – "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

At the same time, he was severe in his rebuking of evil and sin. Another element of his teaching was that of the practical form – how each of us should love our fellow brothers and sisters.

As we anticipate the coming Great Fast in a few weeks, are we prepared to repent and change our ways, and rebuke evil and sin as Saint John taught?