

Date: July 3, 2024

Subject: BURL-Choir Nativity of John the Baptist Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye!

This Saturday/Sunday, the Church commemorates the Nativity of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, John.

The attached Tropar / Kondak text sheet contains the special prayers that will be sung.

Next Monday / Tuesday, the Church will commemorate the Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God.

Brief summaries about the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, and the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God are provided below.

(Note: unless otherwise indicated, all dates are “old style”.)

**** NATIVITY OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST, JOHN

The Nativity of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John: The Gospel (Luke. 1: 5) relates that the righteous parents of Saint John the Baptist, the Priest Zachariah and Elizabeth (September 5), lived in the ancient city of Hebron. They reached old age without having children, since Elizabeth was barren. Once, Saint Zachariah was serving in the Temple at Jerusalem and saw the Archangel Gabriel, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. He predicted that Saint Zachariah would father a son, who would announce the Savior, the Messiah, awaited by the Old Testament Church. Zachariah was troubled, and fear fell upon him. He had doubts that in old age it was possible to have a son, and he asked for a sign. It was given to him, and it was also a chastisement for his unbelief. Zachariah was struck speechless until the time of the fulfillment of the archangel's words.

Saint Elizabeth came to be with child, and fearing derision at being pregnant so late in life, she kept it secret for five months. Then her relative, the Virgin Mary, came to share with her Her own joy. Elizabeth, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” was the first to greet the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. Saint John leaped in his mother's womb at the visit of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and the Son of God incarnate within Her.

Soon Saint Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and all the relatives and acquaintances rejoiced together with her. On the eighth day, in accordance with the Law of Moses, he was circumcised and was called John. Everyone was amazed, since no one in the family had this name. When they asked Saint Zachariah about this, he motioned for a tablet and wrote on it: “His name is John.” Immediately his tongue was loosed, and Saint Zachariah glorified God. He also prophesied about the Coming into the world of the Messiah, and of his own son John, the Forerunner of the Lord (Luke. 1: 68-79).

After the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, wicked king Herod gave orders to kill all male infants. Hearing about this, Saint Elizabeth fled into the wilderness and hid in a cave. Saint Zachariah was at Jerusalem and was doing his priestly service in the Temple. Herod sent soldiers to him to find out the abode of the infant John and his mother. Zachariah answered that their whereabouts were unknown to him, and he was killed right there in the Temple. Righteous Elizabeth

continued to live in the wilderness with her son and she died there. The child John, protected by an angel, dwelt in the wilderness until the time when he came preaching repentance, and was accounted worthy to baptize the Lord.

**** APPEARANCE OF THE TIKHVIN ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God, according to tradition, is one of the icons painted by the holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke. In the fifth century, the icon was brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople, where the Blachernae Church had been built for it.

In 1383, seventy years before Constantinople was seized by the Turks, the icon disappeared from the church and appeared in a radiant light over the waters of Lake Ladoga in northern Russia. Miraculously borne from place to place, it stopped and remained near the town of Tikhvin. On the place where the icon appeared a wooden church was built, dedicated to the Mother of God.

Through the efforts of Grand Prince Vasily Ivanovich (1505–1533), a stone church was erected to replace the wooden one. In 1560, at the orders of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, a men's monastery was built around the church and encompassed by a stone wall.

In 1613–1614, the Swedish army seized Novgorod and made a number of attempts to destroy the monastery, but the holy habitation was saved through the intercessions of the Mother of God.

Once when the Swedes were advancing on the monastery, the brothers decided to flee and take the miraculous icon with them, but they could not move it from its place. This miracle stopped the fainthearted from carrying out their intention, and they remained in the monastery, hoping in the protection of the Mother of God. Those guarding the monastery were few, but they were able to defend it against enemy forces many times their number. The attacking Swedes were frightened by the appearance of what seemed to them either an enormous army of Russians coming from Moscow, or some army of heavenly hosts, and they fled in retreat.

After this miraculous victory over the Swedes, the Tsar sent an envoy to the monastery. A copy was made of the miracle-working icon, which the envoy took to the village of Stolbovo, fifty miles from Tikhvin, where on February 10, 1617 a peace treaty was signed with the Swedes. The main guarantee of peace from the Russian side was the copy of the miracle-working icon.

Later this copy was brought to Moscow and placed in the Dormition Cathedral in the Kremlin; and later at the request of Novgorodians who participated in the war with the Swedes, it was sent to Novgorod and placed in the St. Sophia Cathedral.

The all-Russia celebration in honor of the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God, glorified by innumerable miracles, was established by the Church in commemoration of its miraculous appearance and overcoming of enemies through the intercession of the Mother of God.