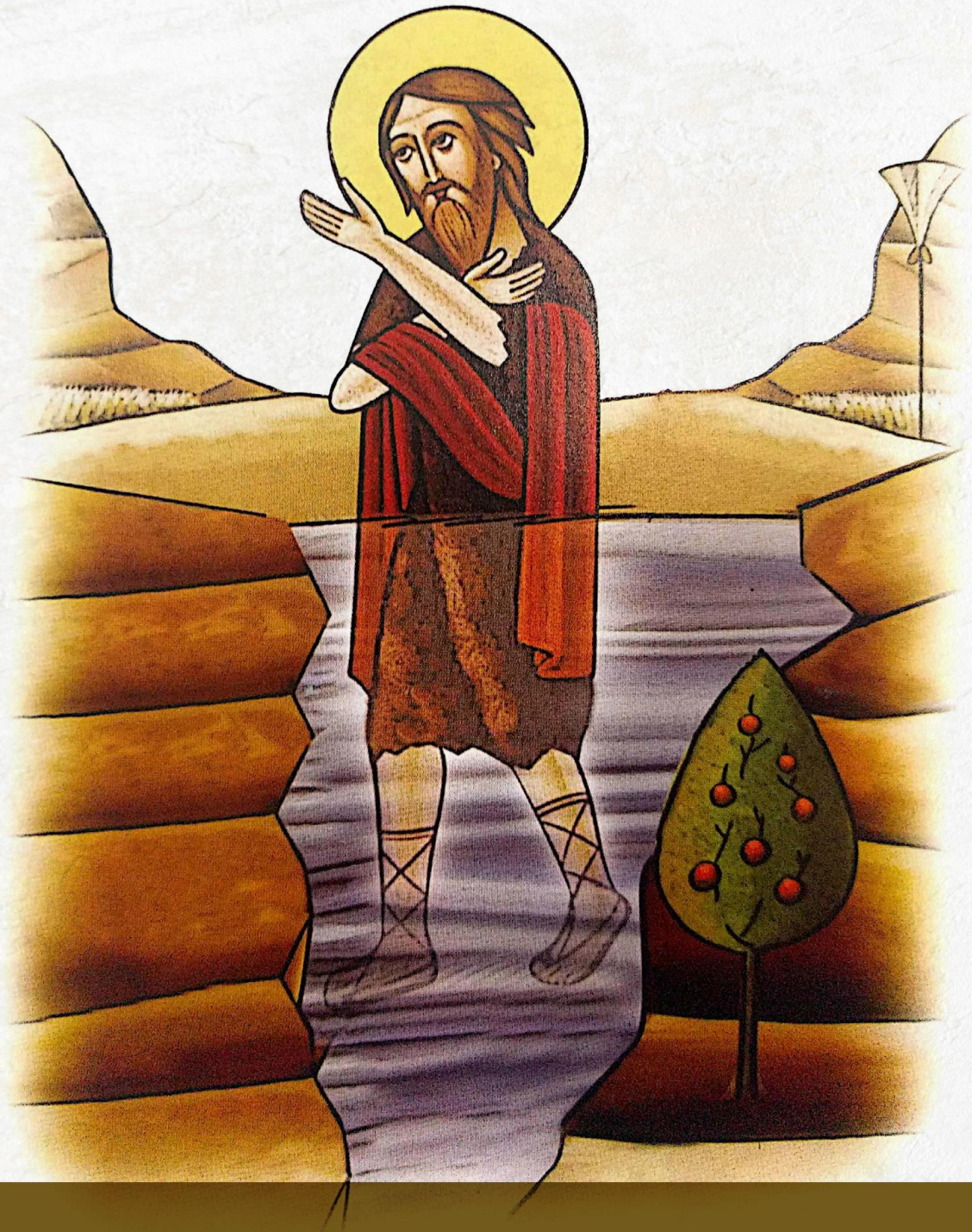


The Institutes That Prepared St. John the Baptist



Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

The Feast of St. John the Baptist **The Institutes That Prepared St. John the Baptist**

Is he the greatest among those born of women?

St. Jacob of Serugh writes about St. John the Baptist saying:

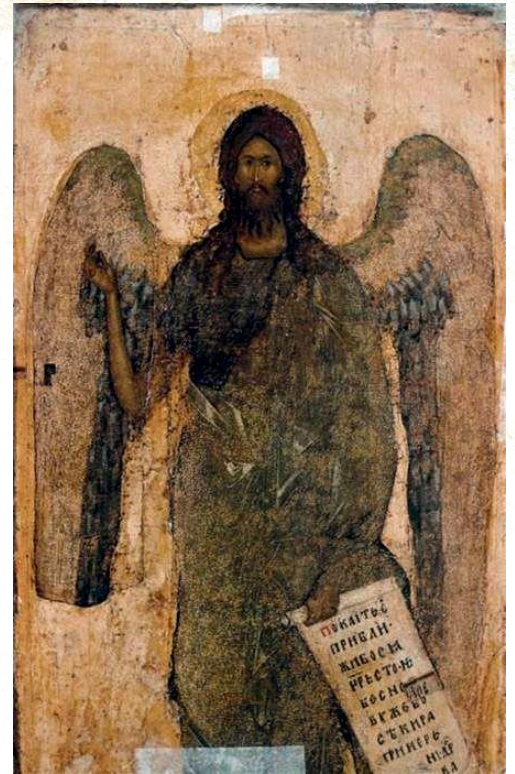
❖ Speaking of Saint John the Baptist is so mysterious, it is so beautiful that I cannot describe its beauty,

How can I dare to describe this beauty? Words cannot tell.

What words or what homilies can describe this great man? Words are lacking and the tongue trembles when I speak of his story.

Do I call him a **prophet**? His story is likened to the apostles, should I consider him an apostle then? Is his rank among the prophets? He is the high priest by which the law was perfected, and a Levi, who never practiced priesthood.

This is he, who was born, according to the flesh, to the daughter of Aron, but offers spiritual sacrifices like Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18). He is the circumcised according to the Law of the Old Testament, yet he reveals the spiritual circumcision, in the baptism of the New Testament.



He is the one, who became the mediator of the two testaments, concluding one, and starting the other for he was truthful...



This is he, who accepted the Holy Spirit, in his mother's womb, and declared the conception of the blessed (Virgin Mary).

This is the beloved, who leaped as a baby in his mother's womb, in front the One who is eternal according to His divinity, who came to the womb of the Virgin...

This is he, who kicked his mother with a leap to bless the young mother, who carries the Ancient of the Days.

This is he, who started his ministry in the womb, and did not stop until the sword silenced him.

This is he, who ran to the river as a fisherman and there, he threw his net and caught a spiritual catch,

This is he, who became a voice of one calling in the wilderness, to prepare the way for the nations to come to the Lord.

He is the one who touched the Son, heard the Father, saw the Holy Spirit and preached the Holy trinity...

The Word of God, saw his beauty and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist."
(Matthew 11:11)

Did he join any institutes to prepare him for ministry?

- 1. The First Institute; The Institute of the Divine Prophecies:** Before John was even born, God granted Malachi the prophet to announce by the spirit of prophecy: "**Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me.** And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 3:1).

According to the foreknowledge of God, He chose John before his creation to prepare the way before the incarnated Word of God, and He called him, "His messenger". He came to deliver the message of God, which he received from

heaven and not from man. He did not start his preparation in an earthly school, but from the prophecies, we understand that his mission was from God Himself. This is the hidden institute which John joined, through God's foreknowledge.

This institute teaches every man to raise his heart to God and ask Him,

“You, O Lord, who searches the heart, reveal to me the way of service that fits me. I am not waiting for a human invitation for consecration or to serve your Kingdom.

Do not let me be confused in choosing the way of my life. Do I witness to You, while I am working in the world and have a blessed family? Or do I consecrate myself for a life of virginity or service? Do I witness to your Bible in my homeland or do you desire me to do so in a different country? Do I dedicate myself to theological studies or invest all my efforts in shepherding your flock? Or in life of meditation and solitude in the desert?”

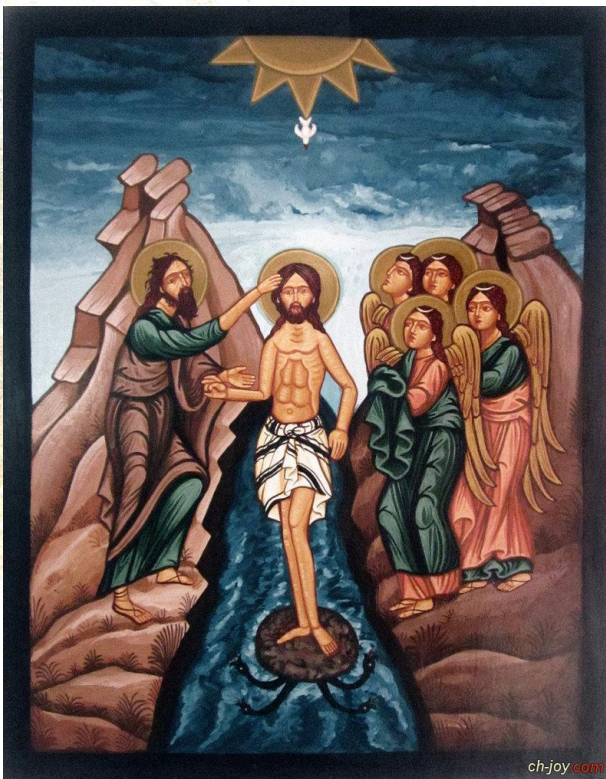


Poor is he, who relies in his choices on someone else to take it for him, whatever his church rank is, or rely on his own personal decisions, without leaning back on the Savior's breast.

2. **The Institute of the Blessed Home:** The second institute in the life of St. John the Baptist, before his birth, was his blessed family; his righteous parents; Zacharias and Elizabeth. They might have been prayed since they got married to have a child who would inherit the priesthood and excel in it, to attain what his parents were unable to attain. God answered their prayers and gave them, His messenger, who prepares the way for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

This blessed couple provide us with a model, not only to the married but even to the virgins – whatever their age may be – that God sanctifies the new generation spiritually, and enkindles their hearts to know the mysteries of God and witness to the Gospel, to renew and build the Kingdom of God. The true believer prays and works for the next generation to be more holy, more knowledgeable, and more loving than the current generation.

- 3. The Institute of Seeking the Lord diligently:** Jacob, the son of Isaac, met the Lord when he was a baby in his mother’s womb, so it was said, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” (Romans 9:13). John the Baptist met Him, when he was a baby in in his mother’s womb, so he leaped joyfully, when St. Mary entered the house of Elizabeth and Zacharias and he even preached to his mother, so she said, “But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43).



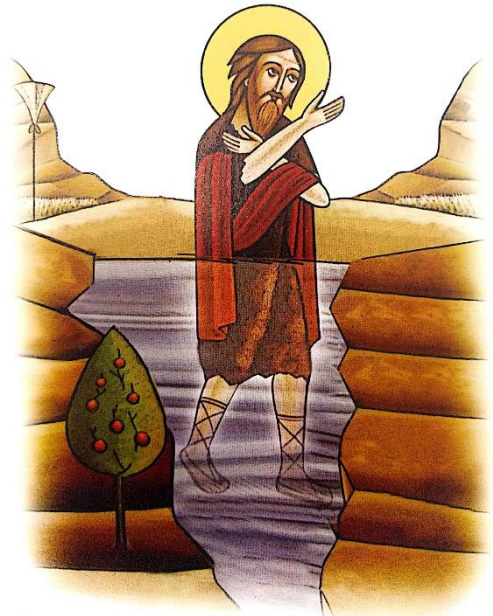
The baby, John the Baptist, did not wait for the day of his birth, but joined the heavenly multitudes in their joy, so he leaped joyfully and witnessed to his mother about the incarnate Messiah, while He was still in the womb of the virgin, before he even spoke a human language. Why can we not hurry to share in the heavenly praises and prayers with the angles, and witness to the Bible, since our childhood?

St. Jacob of Serugh warns us from postponing our meeting with God from day to day, lest we become a toy in the hands of Satan and lose the fervency of our spirits.



4. The Institute of the Holy Wilderness: The baby, John the Baptist, was prepared in the holy wilderness, at the hands of angels for almost thirty years, till the day he started his ministry at the Jordan River. His father, the priest, did not hide him in a place in the Temple or in one of its chambers. John did not meet any of the Levites or priests, to teach him the mysteries of the Old Testament, including the commandments of the Law, the rites of worship or the prophecies, but he enjoyed all this, during his time in the wilderness.

We should not be surprised that St. Mary of Egypt, who lived in corruption since her youth, and offered her body, mind and emotions to fornication and corruption. When she repented in Jerusalem, she did not return to Egypt to sit with one of the spiritual teachers, but went into the wilderness to struggle against Satan and all his powers, supported by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. St. Zosimas, the priest, was surprised when he met her and found that she memorized many verses from Scripture, even though she never had a Bible or was taught by anyone.



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We are in desperate need of quiet times with the Lord, enjoying his love and listening to His voice inside our hearts, praying that He would shine His face upon us and prepare us to partake of His Holy Body and His precious Blood joyfully and with the fear of God.

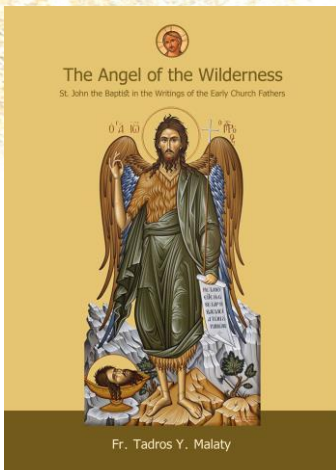
5. The Institute of Experiencing the Holy Trinity: Who can describe his feelings when he saw the heavens parting, hearing the voice of the Father and seeing the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, while he places his hands on the head of his



Master, about whom he said, that he is not worthy to stoop down and loose His sandal strap. (Mark 1:7)

The real school that prepares the believer or servant is experiencing the Holy Trinity, to receive His grace, which sanctifies his mind, heart, emotions and body, grows in the Divine knowledge and becomes the “Man of God.”

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty
**The Feast of the Martyrdom of
St. John the Baptist**
2 Thoout 1737 - 12 Sep. 2020



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The Angel of the Wilderness

(St. John the Baptist in the writings of the Early Church Fathers)