

ANNUNCIATION & NATIVITY OF JOHN

THE LIFE OF CHRIST WITH SAINT LUKE



LEARNING ABOUT SAINT JOHN IN ICONOGRAPHY

**Both an icon of St John and of the Nativity of St John are provided in full at the end of this lesson*

As we look at the icon of Saint John above, we see Christ blessing John. Saint John is the greatest and last of the Old Testament prophets. His hand holds both a scroll (indicating holy wisdom) and a cross (he was martyred). Not all icons of St. John depict him with wings, but when they do, this is to remind us that he lived like the angels, meaning he didn't place importance on food, the type of clothes he wore, or seeking to have all the things that make him comfortable.

1

GOAL

Learn about St. John's parents and icons depicting him

2

AT CHURCH

St. John is our parish's patron saint. He is also depicted on our iconostasis twice.

3

AT HOME

St. John's family is an ex: We change our family dynamic by the lives we choose to live.



Class routine:
Move my photo from "home" to "church"



Class routine:
Light a candle - respectfully prayerfully without playing



Class routine:
Venerate our icon



Sing "Lord have mercy" in English, Greek, Arabic, Romanian

ZACHARIAS & ELIZABETH

Saint John the Baptist's parents are Saints Zacharias and Elizabeth. Zacharias was a priest and would serve in the temple twice a year and on major feast days, such as Passover. The temple was a huge place and you could see it from everywhere in Jerusalem. There was so much to do there that they needed thousands of priests to help - and Zacharias was one of them.

One day, while Zacharias had lit some incense in the temple and was praying, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him. Gabriel told Zacharias that he and his wife would have a son. Zacharias was surprised by this because they were both old now. How could they possibly have a child? Gabriel told Zacharias that they would, in fact, have a son and that because Zacharias didn't believe him, he would not be able to talk anymore!

When Zacharias came out of the temple, many people were waiting for him. He tried and tried to tell them what happened, but he couldn't say a word! All the people knew *something* happened, but they had no idea that an angel had appeared to him.



Zacharias went home to his wife, Elizabeth, and not too long after this, she had a baby boy. Everyone expected the baby to be named after his father, but Elizabeth told them no. The people looked to Zacharias and he motioned for a writing tablet and told them that the baby's name is John. Immediately, Zacharias could talk again!

John grew up to be a great man (Matthew 11:11) and repeatedly told everyone, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2) He is known as the Forerunner and Baptist. A forerunner is someone who is sent in advance to announce the coming of someone else. St. John told everyone that Jesus was coming to save them. He is also called the Baptist because he baptized many people, including Jesus.

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, pages 7-28

The Gospel of Luke: Good News for the Poor
by Fr. Lawrence Farley, pages 23-54

[*Annunciation of the Birth of the Forerunner John*](#) Podcast
by Dr. Jeannie Constantinou



ICON OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

**Icon provided at the end of this lesson*

In this icon, we see Saint Elizabeth depicted on the left side as she's sitting on a bed after her baby has been born. There are three women tending to her and one tending to her son, John, who is in the cradle. Her husband, Zacharias, is depicted on the bottom, right corner. He has a tablet in his hand and is writing, "His name is John."

ICONOSTASIS ACTIVITY

**File folders containing the activity will be in the classroom for each child*

The goal of this activity is to help our children identify and learn about the saints on our iconostasis.

Activity Option 1:

Pass out the folders and the bags of icons. Inside the folder, you will find a photo of our iconostasis with the icons missing. Ask the children to find the icon of Christ in their bag. He is the most recognizable and will be the easiest for the kids to find. Then ask them, "Where is Jesus on the iconostasis in our church?" Then have them place Him in the correct spot. Next, ask the kids to find

the icon of the Theotokos. "Who is she?" "Where does she belong on the iconostasis?" Then ask the kids to find Saint John the Baptist in their bag. There will be two in there. Take the opportunity to explain to them that when we are looking at the iconostasis, St. John always is placed to the right of Jesus. Since our church is named after St. John, we also have a second icon of him that belongs to the left of the Theotokos. This spot is always reserved for an icon of the church's patron saint.

Activity Option 2:

Learn the names of the people depicted on the icons on our iconostasis.

Open one bag of icons and pull out one icon at a time. We have been learning to recognize Jesus, the Theotokos, and St. John the Baptist in icons. When you pull these icons out of the bag, ask the children each time who is depicted. When you pull out the rest of the icons, go ahead and tell them who is on the icon this first time.

Then mix up the icons and then ask them who is on each icon as you hold one up.

We are going to use this activity several times throughout the year. It is unlikely that every child will know who is on every icon and where they belong on the iconostasis. That's expected and



why we are doing this activity. Our goal is to work towards every child in the class being able to tell you who is depicted on each icon, a little bit about that person, and where they belong on our iconostasis by the end of the year. They will get better with each time they do this activity.

Remind the kids to look at the iconostasis the next time they are in church so they'll be ready for when you pull out this activity again!

On our iconostasis: *from left to right*

- St. Mary Magdalene
- St. John the Baptist (Parish Patron Saint)
- (Door) Archangel Michael
- Theotokos
- (Royal Doors) Annunciation - Gabriel & Theotokos
- Jesus Christ
- (Door) Archangel Gabriel
- St. John the Baptist
- St. George

SING, “LORD, HAVE MERCY”

English: Lord, have mercy

Greek: Kyrie eleison

Arabic: Ya Rab Urham

Romanian: Doamne, miluiește

We will spend this year learning to sing, “[Lord, have mercy.](#)”

PreK & K can focus on English and Greek. 1st & 2nd grade can focus on English, Greek, Arabic, and Romanian.



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AT HOME

FOR PARENTS

When the elderly gathered at his house in the winter, Father Arsenios' first job was to light his open fireplace and then, as was noted above, to tell them a parable from the Gospel, the life of the Saint of the day (Synaxarion), or else read something from the Old Testament. And afterwards, the aged men would go home, or to neighboring houses where people gathered, and repeat these teachings to their children instead of reciting fairy tales. Thus, everyone benefitted spiritually.

Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian
by Saint Paisios

St. John's family is an example for ours: We change our family dynamic by the lives we choose to live and this affects our subsequent generations as well.

Oftentimes, when we read the lives of the saints, we see clusters of families. This is because we strengthen and teach one another through our living example - within our own homes or within our extended family, including our parish community.

Examples of families of saints:

- Joseph the Betrothed and his daughter, Salome the Myrrh-bearer and her sons, James and John (the Theologian)
- Macrina the Elder and her son, Basil the Elder, his wife, Emilia (and her martyred father), and their children - Basil, Gregory, Peter, Naucratis, Macrina, and Theosebia.

HOME ACTIVITY #3

Let's focus this week on one aspect of our family's spiritual life we'd like to improve:

- Prayer: Upon waking; before meals; before bed
- Reading the Bible together: as part of story time; before bed; as part of family prayer time
- Going to church services: Attend vespers; attend orthros; arrive on time for liturgy on Sunday
- Our interactions with one another: our tone of voice; being more patient, forgiving, and merciful



