

# 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.



**Annunciation:**  
an announcement

~

by Archangel  
Gabriel



**Temple in  
Jerusalem:**  
central place of  
worship for the  
Jews



**Forerunner:**  
a person who is  
sent in advance to  
announce the  
coming of someone  
~  
St. John

## 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!

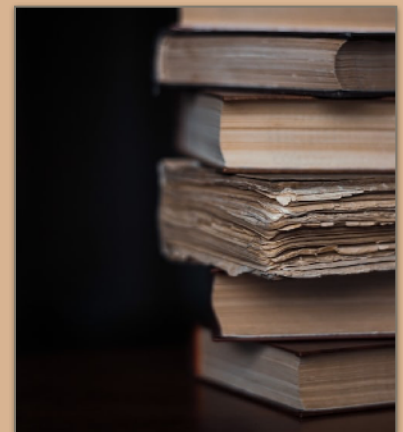
John grew up to be a great man (Matthew 11:11) and repeatedly told everyone, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2) He is known as the Forerunner and Baptist. A forerunner is someone who is sent in advance to announce the coming of someone else. St. John told everyone that Jesus 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 Elizabeth on the left side. She is sitting on a bed and three midwives are tending to her, while another midwife is tending to her son, John, in the cradle. Zacharias is at the bottom, right of the icon and is writing on a tablet to let everyone know, "His name is John." In the background, we see walls and doorways. The curtain hanging up tells us this is an indoor event which is happening inside their home.

How can you tell which is the icon of the Nativity of Mary, John, or Jesus? Look carefully and there are many different ways you can quickly tell the difference:

- The Theotokos will have three stars on her clothing.
- Look at the men - Joachim is often depicted with white hair. Zacharias will have a phylactery on top of his head. Joseph is often pondering while an old man (Satan) is talking to him.
- The Nativity of the Theotokos and St. John occurs in a home. The Nativity of Christ occurs in a cave.



## PUZZLE: CITY OF JERUSALEM

*The wooden puzzle will be in your classroom. You can let the kids play with it for the last 5-10 minutes of class.*



SING: O HOLY APOSTLES

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## AT HOME

### FOR PARENTS

**W**hen 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







