

Date: March 6, 2024

Subject: BURL-Choir Meatfare Sunday Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye!

This Saturday / Sunday is the second-to-last Saturday / Sunday before the beginning of Great Lent. It is called Meatfare Sunday since it is officially the last day before Easter for eating meat. It commemorates Christ's parable of the Last Judgment. We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus [like Zacchaeus], to see ourselves as we are [as did the repentant Publican], and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, His only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God, devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience. From the Gospel:

... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and in prison and you visited me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me ...

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

Earlier, this Thursday / Friday, the Church will commemorate the first and second finding of the Honorable Head of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist of the Lord, John.

A brief summary about the first and second finding of the Honorable Head of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist of the Lord, John, is provided below.

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

****** FIRST AND SECOND FINDING OF THE HONORABLE HEAD OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET JOHN, BAPTIST OF THE LORD**

After the Beheading of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John (August 29), his body was buried by disciples in the Samaritan city of Sebaste, and his venerable head was hidden by Herodias in an unclean place. Saint Joanna (June 27), the wife of King Herod's steward Chuza (Luke 8:3), secretly took the holy head and placed it into a vessel and buried it on the Mount of Olives in one of Herod's properties.

After many years, this property passed into the possession of a government official who became a monk with the name of Innocent. He built a church and a cell there. When they started to dig the foundation, the vessel with the venerable head of John the Baptist was uncovered. Innocent recognized its great holiness from the signs of grace emanating from it. Thus occurred the First Finding of the Head. Innocent preserved it with great piety, but fearful that the holy relic might be abused by unbelievers, before his own death he again hid it in that same place, where it was found. Upon his death the church fell into ruin and was destroyed.

During the days of Saint Constantine the Great (May 21), when Christianity began to flourish, the holy Forerunner appeared twice to two monks journeying to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to the holy places, and he revealed the location of his venerable head.

The monks uncovered the holy relic and, placing it into a sack of camel-hair, they proceeded homewards. Along the way they encountered an unnamed potter and gave him the precious burden to carry. Not knowing what he was carrying, the potter continued on his way. But the holy Forerunner appeared to him and ordered him to flee from the careless and lazy monks, with what he held in his hands. The potter concealed himself from the monks and at home he preserved the venerable head with reverence. Before his death he placed it in a water jug and gave it to his sister.

From that time the venerable head was successively preserved by devout Christians, until the priest Eustathius (infected with the Arian heresy) came into possession of it. He beguiled a multitude of the infirm who had been healed by the holy head, ascribing their cures to the fact that it was in the possession of an Arian. When his blasphemy was uncovered, he was compelled to flee. After he buried the holy relic in a cave, near Emesa, the heretic intended to return later and use it for disseminating falsehood. God, however, did not permit this. Pious monks settled in the cave, and then a monastery arose at this place. In the year 452 Saint John the Baptist appeared to Archimandrite Marcellus of this monastery, and indicated where his head was hidden. This became celebrated as the Second Finding. The holy relic was transferred to Emesa, and later to Constantinople.