

The Feast of the Beheading of the Venerable Head of Saint John the Baptist in Kournas, Apokoronas, and Chania



With prayerful reverence and the participation of a large number of faithful, the Holy Metropolis of Kydonia and Apokoronas celebrated the Beheading of the Venerable Head of the Holy and Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, with the celebrations centred upon the Great Vespers in Kournas, Apokoronas, and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of Saint John in Chania.

Festal Vespers in Kournas, Apokoronas

On the afternoon of the eve of the feast, His Eminence Metropolitan Titos of Kydonia and Apokoronas visited the celebrating Church of Saint John in the Parish of Kournas, Apokoronas, where the Great Feast Day Vespers were celebrated in the

presence of local authorities and a large number of faithful.

A particularly significant moment during the service was the appointment of the Parish Priest, Fr Vardis Zymvragoudakis, as a Spiritual Father and Confessor.

Addressing the new Confessor in a paternal manner, His Eminence exhorted him to exercise his ministry with discernment, compassion, love and prayer, supporting those who approach his stole bearing the problems, trials and crosses of their lives.

His Eminence then spoke at length about the person of Saint John the Baptist, whom he described as “an earthly angel and a heavenly man”. He spoke about his miraculous birth to Zacharias and Elizabeth; his leaping in his mother’s womb when Elizabeth encountered the Most Holy Theotokos; his ascetic life in the wilderness; his preaching of repentance; and the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan.

He made particular reference to the boldness of the Forerunner before Herod, emphasising that the Saint did not hesitate to defend the truth even when he knew that doing so could cost him his life.



“Thus was silenced the voice of the Forerunner, the voice of sincerity, the voice of holiness,” His Eminence observed, adding that the Church honours Saint John as the one who “prepared the way of the Lord” and opened the way for the coming of

Christ into the world.

The Metropolitan also expressed his joy at his first pastoral visit to Kournas and promised that he would be present each year for the Festal Vespers of Saint John, joining the people of Apokoronas in prayer.

He further encouraged the faithful to turn to Saint John during the difficulties and trials of their lives and to make use of the tranquillity and natural beauty of the area, which lends itself to prayer and spiritual reflection.

At the conclusion, he thanked the Parish Priest, Fr Vardis; the Mayor; the President of the Community; the Deputy Mayors; the chanters; the Parish Council; the young people; and all those who contributed to the preparation and celebration of the feast.

For his part, Fr Vardis Zymvragoudakis, welcoming His Eminence on behalf of the Parish, described his first pastoral visit to Kournas as a particular blessing.

He emphasised that the presence of a Bishop in a parish is not merely an administrative visit, but the presence “of the shepherd among his flock and of the father among his spiritual children”.



He personally thanked His Eminence for the paternal love, trust and discreet care with which he embraces him, assuring him that both he and the entire Parish of Kournas would remain close to him in love, unity and prayer.

Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of Saint John in Chania

On the morning of the main feast day, Saturday, 29 August, His Eminence Metropolitan Titos presided over the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the celebrating Church of Saint John in Chania.

In his homily, His Eminence presented the life and ministry of Saint John the Baptist in a simple and vivid manner, beginning with the meeting of the Most Holy Theotokos and Elizabeth and the leaping of Saint John in his mother's womb.

He referred to the ascetic life of the Forerunner, his preaching, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan, and his courageous stand before Herod.

Focusing upon the Beheading of the Venerable Head of Saint John, His Eminence emphasised that the Saint became a martyr for the truth, refusing to remain silent in the face of sin and injustice.

He also spoke about the prominent place occupied by Saint John the Baptist in the life and worship of the Church, pointing out that his image is found beside Christ on the iconostasis of Orthodox churches, always pointing towards Him and proclaiming throughout the ages: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."



His Eminence called upon the faithful to place the Divine Liturgy at the centre of their lives and to remain united with the Church through prayer, confession and participation in the Sacred Mysteries.

“The Divine Liturgy is the most precious thing we have in our lives. The centre of the world is the Holy Altar,” he emphasised, noting that genuine spiritual life and communion with Christ can give a person strength in the face of the temptations, trials and problems of everyday life.

Following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the Parish Priest, Fr Alexandros, warmly thanked His Eminence for his presence and paternal blessing at the parish feast, as well as the clergy, chanters, Parish Council members, altar servers, and all those, both seen and unseen, who contributed to the celebration.

A particular blessing of the day was also the tonsure of Mr Ioannis Tzanakakis as a Reader, with His Eminence wishing him a good and blessed ministry in the Church.

The liturgical celebrations concluded in an atmosphere of spiritual joy, with the sacred clergy and devout faithful honouring the great Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord and seeking his intercessions for the local Church and the entire world.













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