

receive light, joy, and spiritual gladness.

14-16. And king Herod heard of Him, (for His name was spread abroad,) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. This Herod was the son of him who slew the infants. He was tetrarch, but Mark calls him "king", using the name without differentiation. When Herod, then, heard of the miracles of the Lord, and knowing that John, whom he killed without a cause, had been a righteous man, he suspected that John had risen from the dead, and by virtue of his resurrection had acquired the power to work miracles. For previously John had not worked any sign. But after his resurrection, Herod thought that John had received the power to work miracles. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah, for He rebuked many, as when He said, "O faithless generation!"⁶ Herod was a coward, and he was so wretched that he was even afraid of the dead.

17-20. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Mark here gives parenthetically the account of John's death, making use of the opportunity. Some say that Herod stole Herodias away while Philip was still living, and on this account they reprove him as a transgressor of the law, marrying the wife of his brother who was still living. Others say that Philip had died, but had left a daughter. As there was a daughter, Herod ought not to have married the wife of his brother, not even after his death. For the law at that time commanded a man to take his brother's wife when there was no child; but here there was a daughter, and therefore Herod's marriage to

⁶ Mt. 17:17

Herodias was unlawful. See how strong is erotic frenzy, that even Herod, who had such reverence and fear of John, would now abandon him just to do the bidding of debauchery.

21-29. And a convenient day was come, when Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of this Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he made an oath unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for the sake of those who sat at table with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison. And brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. A drinking party is convened. Satan dances by means of the young girl. An unlawful and ungodly and indeed mindless oath is sworn. And the wicked woman says, "Give me at once, at this very hour." And the mindless Herod, driven by lust, is afraid of his oath, and for this reason slays the righteous man. But in this case he ought to have broken his oath, rather than commit such an abomination. For it is not always good to keep one's oath.⁷ These things may also be understood in a spiritual sense. Herod represents the fleshly and superficial Jewish people.⁸ He married this woman, false and shameless glory, and even today her daughter, erroneous knowledge of the Scriptures, dances and moves among the Jewish people, beguiling them. For they think that they know the Scriptures, but they do not. For they

⁷ Here two sentences in the Greek text have been omitted, which define for the eleventh century Greek reader the New Testament Greek words for 'executioner' and 'corpse'.

⁸ 'Herod' means 'fleshly' or 'skinlike'. See Bl. Theophylact's comment on Mt. 14.19-21 in Vol. 1 of the *Explanation*, p. 125.