

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—Tone 6
Holy Prophet Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth

Vespers

At “Lord, I Call”, sing the stichera verses (6) of the Resurrection in Tone 6.

Then these stichera (4) for the Prophet Zachariah in Tone 4. You were anointed with chrisam and clothed in the sacred robe, O glorious Zachariah. Like the Angels, O blessed one, you served God, mediating between the Creator and His creation. You visibly received manifestations of the divine Spirit. Therefore we bless you and, as we divinely celebrate your holy feast, we glorify the Savior. (2x)

You beheld the Virgin’s Child, Who is co-eternal with the Father, and you prophesied plainly to your son, O God-inspired Zachariah: “You will be a prophet to prepare His ways.” With him we bless you and celebrate today your holy feast, O God-bearer who are greatly blessed.

You were a living temple of the Divine Spirit, and in the midst of the Temple, O glorious one, you conversed with God with a pure heart. You were unjustly slain, completing your course as a martyr, O wondrous one. Thus, by your own blood you entered into the heavenly temple, where you intercede for those who honor you.

After “Glory...” in Tone 8 (Prophet Zachariah)

You were rightly clothed with the vestments of the priesthood of the Law, serving according to the order of Aaron. While standing in the Temple, all-blessed one, you plainly beheld the form of an Angel. Therefore as we sing in honor of your translation, O Zachariah, we praise you, for you fathered the glorious John. Intercede for us with the merciful God that we may be saved!

After “Now and ever...” the Dogmatic in Tone 6.

At the Aposticha, sing the verses of the Resurrection in Tone 6.



After “Glory...” in Tone 2 (Prophet Zachariah)

Arrayed in priestly vesture, as a chaste priest you entered the Holy of Holies. You served God without defilement, observing the Law like Aaron and leading Israel like Moses. You were a revelation of purity, and therefore you were killed. But your righteous blood is a source of healing for us. And, like fragrant myrrh, reveals to us the sweetness of future eternal life. O thrice-blessed Zachariah, father of John and husband of Elizabeth, pray fervently in behalf of our souls!

Resurrectional Troparion, Tone 6

The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure Body. Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord who didst rise from the dead: glory to Thee!

Troparion, Tone 4 (Prophet Zachariah)

Robed in the vestments of the priesthood, according to the Law of God you offered whole-burnt offerings in a sacred manner, wise Zachariah. You became a luminary and a seer of the mysteries, bearing within yourself the signs of grace, all-wise one. Slain by the sword in the temple of God, O prophet of Christ, intercede together with the Forerunner that our souls may be saved!

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos



About the Saints we commemorate today:

The Holy Prophet Zachariah and the Righteous Elizabeth were the parents of the holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John. They were descended from the lineage of Aaron: St Zachariah, son of Barach, was a priest in the Jerusalem Temple, and St Elizabeth was the sister of St Anna, the mother of the Most Holy Theotokos. The righteous spouses, "walking in all the commandments of the Lord (Luke 1:6), suffered barrenness, which in those times was considered a punishment from God.

Once, during his turn of priestly service in the Temple, St Zachariah was told by an angel that his aged wife would bear him a son, who "will be great in the sight of the Lord" (Luke 1:15) and "will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17).

Zachariah doubted that this prediction would come true, and for his weakness of faith he was punished by becoming mute. When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit she announced that his name was John, although no one in their family had this name.

They asked Zachariah and he also wrote the name John down on a tablet. Immediately the gift of speech returned to him, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, he began to prophesy about his son as the Forerunner of the Lord.

When King Herod heard from the Magi about the birth of the Messiah, he decided to kill all the infants up to two years old at Bethlehem and the surrounding area, hoping that the new-born Messiah would be among them.

Herod knew about John's unusual birth and he wanted to kill him, fearing that he was the foretold King of the Jews. But Elizabeth hid herself and the infant in the hills. The murderers searched everywhere for John. Elizabeth, when she saw her pursuers, began to implore God for their safety, and immediately the hill opened up and concealed her and the infant from their pursuers.

In these tragic days St Zachariah was taking his turn at the services in the Temple. Soldiers sent by Herod tried in vain to learn from him the whereabouts of his son. Then, by command of Herod, they murdered this holy prophet, having stabbed him between the temple and the altar (MT 23: 35). Elizabeth died forty days after her husband, and St John, preserved by the Lord, dwelt in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to the nation of Israel.

On the Greek calendar, Sts Zachariah and Elizabeth are also commemorated on June 24, the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist.