



Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." He even swore many things to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. So, he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in your wondrous shining glory, although this is hidden from my eyes. I hope in the peace and everlasting joy of the world to come, for this world is a valley of tears. I love you, even though I am not always able to discern the love in your intentions when you permit me to suffer. You are my God and my all.

Petition: Lord, let me never fear the consequences of speaking the truth.

1. Speaking Truth to Power: Although Herod was a cruel tyrant, John the Baptist did not hesitate to condemn his adulterous conduct and to denounce his sin publicly. John was moved by the Holy Spirit to give witness and teach the people that no one can legitimately violate God's commandments, not even a king. John did not fear the

consequences of his actions, because he knew that if he were faithful, God would be at his side and never let him down, even if he had to suffer on account of the truth. We, too, need to give courageous witness to our family, friends and to the society at large. When we do, God will be with us and we will have nothing to fear.

2. It Was Something That You Said: Mark tells us that Herod, although he resented what John said in accusing him of adultery, nonetheless “like[d] to listen to him,” and he was “much perplexed.” In his moral weakness, he persisted in his sin, yet the cries of the prophet to repent did reach his conscience. Herod was in confusion. Something was stirring in his conscience; the Holy Spirit was moving inside him to bring him to true repentance for his sin. God never abandons the sinner but gives him grace to turn back to him. We should never lose hope for one who seems to be lost and wandering in sin. We should always continue to speak the truth with love and pray for a full conversion. God can change the heart of even the worst of sinners. He has forgiven us so much, and he can forgive others as well.

3. A Conversion Cut Short: The Gospel tells how Herod, in an imprudent promise to Herodias’ daughter, found himself compromised and, for fear of losing face, had to order the beheading of John the Baptist. Here his moral weakness overcame the first stirrings of the grace of conversion. He closed his heart to God’s action due to his lust and vanity, and he committed the terrible crime of murder of an innocent man. How sin can darken the conscience and extinguish God’s grace in the heart of a person given over only to satisfying their passions.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I want to be faithful to your teachings and to be frank with those I love who need to hear your word. I know that takes prudence, courage and steadfastness. Help me to be true to you. Give me the grace of a good conscience always to speak the truth with rectitude and love for your law.

Resolution: I will pray for the grace to witness to the truth, “in season and out of season,” no matter what the consequences.