

GOSPEL PEARLS

Accepting preaching

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For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (Mk 6: 17-29)

Even perverts, as spiritual creatures, were created in God's image and will bear that seal forever. They can therefore appreciate, thanks to this ever-present image in them, the Truth taught by holy people. That is why Herod also willingly listened to John the Baptist's preaching. Sometimes such listening leads to conversion, as happened to the

“Unnamed man” in the Italian novel *The Betrothed*, thanks to his meeting with Lucia. But if such people do not convert, the perverse will inevitably yield to evil tendencies and ignore God's call. This is what happened to Herod who, when condemning St. John the Baptist, fell victim to a promise made rashly by his lustful tendencies and above all, by the fear of losing power. Let us try to imitate the example of the words of the holy people we meet in our lives even and especially when their words are uncomfortable for us to accept.