

## The Third St. John of Jerusalem

Masons around the world observe St. John the Baptist Day, traditionally celebrated on June 24<sup>th</sup>, and the feast of St. John the Evangelist, on December 27<sup>th</sup>. Together, these two revered figures in Masonry are said to comprise the “Holy Saints John of Jerusalem” referred to in Masonic ritual and lore. But, there was a third Saint John, the example of whose life also merits emulation by members of our gentle Craft.

He was St. John the Almoner (also known as John the Merciful and John the Almsgiver). He was the son of the governor of the island of Cyprus, and was born on that island in the sixth century A.D. Of noble descent, as a young man he was married and had children, but they died, after which he entered upon a life of Christian service and charity. He was elected Patriarch of Alexandria, and has been canonized by both the Greek and Roman Catholic churches. His festival is observed on November 11<sup>th</sup> and January 23<sup>rd</sup>, respectively.



Some Masonic historians have suggested that St. John the Almoner was originally intended as the patron saint of the original Knights Templar. Leaving his native country and renouncing his royal birthright he went to Jerusalem to help, aid and assist early pilgrims. He founded a hospital and organized a fraternal society dedicated to attending to sick and wounded Christians, and to offering aid and comfort to those who visited the Holy Sepulcher, burial place of Jesus Christ.

According to Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry: “These noble and charitable acts recommended this St. John as worthy to become the patron of a society whose only object is charity, while he exposed his life a thousand times in the cause of virtue. When death, at last, overtook him in the midst of his labors, he left the example of his virtues to the brethren, who made it their duty to endeavor to imitate him. Rome canonized him under the name of St. John the Almoner, or St. John of Jerusalem, and early Masons, whose temples had been destroyed by barbarians and which he had caused to be rebuilt, revered him.”

Some Templar-style orders throughout the world still include references to the account of St. John the Almoner’s great charity to the poor. His extraordinary attribute of charity is reflected in his lifetime of service to the less fortunate, as well as in his establishment of hospitals for the relief of pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land.

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...Another nugget from the quarry: