



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue

PO Box 3

Slickville, PA 15684-0003

[724] 468-5581

www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org

Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor

23 Station Street

Carnegie, PA 15106-3014

[412] 279-5640 home

[412] 956-6626 cell

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Bishop Robert, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Cuthbert Jack, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John Nakonachny, Deacon Dennis Lapushanski, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Joshua Agosto and his family, Mike Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Michael Miller, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, George & Mika Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Doris Artman, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Charles & Esther Holupka, Wanda Mefford, Lynn (Bush) Gill, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, Glenn Miller, Vince Ferro, Michael Pawlyshyn, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—21-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Woloschak, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Nellie Patsko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Pete Niederberger, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Lloyd Sheakley, Diane McDaniel, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Tony Butecoff, Carl & Margaret Reed, Theodore Demopoulos, Jillian

Bowman, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Doug Smith [Millie Kerr's son-in-law], Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], Mel & Charlotte Malik, Paula Pasquinelli, David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, June Miller, Corey Guich, Monica Salvatore, Glenda Tickerhoof, Robert Vangrin, Juliana Leis, Susan "Billie" Mason, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, LuAnne [Mike Horvath's daughter], Donald Griffey, Martin Kapusta, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [child with cerebral palsy], Thomas Stutzman, Dr. Kirsten Ream, and Daria Masur. ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Steve Sakal, and Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

You who believe when you are well, see to it that you do not fall away from God in the time of misfortune. *St. John of Kronstadt*

PRAYER LIST: Please help update our prayer list. If you or someone you know no longer needs to be on the prayer list or if there is someone who needs to be on the list please let Father Bob know. Remember—Prayers are ALWAYS FREE! Thank you!

Please remember Ryan Fuller, James John Logue, George Senita, John Kirkowski, Matthew Machak, Michael Repasky, and ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR "BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION" AND CAMPBELL'S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Debbie Paouncic's class. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12 **Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM**
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; APOSTLES SILAS & SILVANUS OF THE 70 & THOSE WITH THEM: CRESCENE, EPEMETUS, & ANDRONICUS; HIEROMARTYR POLYCHRONIUS-BISHOP OF BABYLON, MARTYRS PRESBYTERS PARMENIUS, HELIMENAS, & CHRYSOTELUS, DEACONS LUKE & MOCIUS, AND ABDON, SENNEN, MAXIMUS, & OLYMPIUS; HIEROMARTYR VALENTINE=BISHOP OF INTERAMNA IN ITALY; JARTYR JOHN THE SOLDIER AT CONSTANTINOPLE

Tone 1

I Corinthians 4:9-16

Matthew 17:14-23

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Victor Burlack & Steve Kuzman—Burlack & Paouncic families

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14 **BEGINNING OF THE DORMITION FAST**

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19 **Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM**
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

*******PAGE 236 IN THE BLACK DIVINE LITURGY BOOKS*******

Tone 2

II Peter 1:10-19

Matthew 17:1-9

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Rae Ruth Batch—Harry and family
Slickville Lions Club Chicken BBQ—\$6 per half chicken—BP Gas Station—Routes 22 and 819

SUNDAY, AUGUST 26 **Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM**
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—LEAVE-TAKING OF THE TRANSFIGURATION; SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR; MARTYR HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME & 18 WITH HIM INCLUDING MARTYRS CONCORDIA, IRENAEUS, & ABUNDIUS

Tone 3

I Corinthians 15:1-11

Matthew 19:16-26

Litany in Blessed Memory of Helen Pytlak—Helen & Fred Vrbanic

**BULLETIN INSERT FOR 12 AUGUST 2012
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; APOSTLES SILAS &
SILVANUS OF THE 70 & THOSE WITH THEM: CRESCENE,
EPENETUS, & ANDRONICUS; HIEROMARTYR
POLYCHRONIUS-BISHOP OF BABYLON, MARTYRS
PRESBYTERS PARMENIUS, HELIMENAS, & CHRYSOTELUS,
DEACONS LUKE & MOCIUS, AND ABDON, SENNEN,
MAXIMUS, & OLYMPIUS; HIEROMARTYR
VALENTINE=BISHOP OF INTERAMNA IN ITALY; JARTYR
JOHN THE SOLDIER AT CONSTANTINOPLE**

TROPARION—TONE 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews;
While the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure Body;
Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior,
Granting life to the world.
The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of life:
Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!
Glory to Thy Kingdom!
Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages
of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 1

As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Thyself.
Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished!
Adam exults, O Master!
Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to Thee:
Thou are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 1

READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.
PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.
READER: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!
PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.
READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.
PEOPLE: As we have set our hope on Thee.

ALLELUIA VERSES

God gives vengeance to me, and subdues people under me.

He magnifies the salvation of the king, and deals mercifully with His Christ, with David and his seed forever!

Giving Thanks Unto God

Matthew 26:27-Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”

The Lord Jesus Christ saw it fitting to give thanks as He gave the cup to His disciples to drink. Believers drinking from the Holy Chalice have reason to give thanks to God. Believers are blessed by God beyond imagination.

Thanksgiving to God has a place in the lives of believers throughout each day. Believers are blessed in more ways than can be enumerated and identified. Actions take place far from the minds of believers but benefit believers.

In this busy world, believers need to stop and think about the multitudes of blessings and give continuous thanksgiving to God. Even in moments of pain and suffering, blessings take place deserving of thanksgiving to God.

Even in times of great tragedy, God is blessing His people in many different ways. Air is present to breathe. Sunlight brings light and warmth. The earth is a base to stand on. People with great concern come to the fore.

Believers benefit from prayers offered by individuals known and unknown to them. Believers benefit from the physical location where they make their homes. Believers benefit from the unwavering and radiant love of God.

Jesus did not only offer the cup to His disciples. He continues to offer Himself to individuals throughout the world and throughout the centuries. Jesus transcends time and geographical boundaries.

Mark 8:6-So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude.

God has provided food from the beginning of the world. Food for the soul is as important as food for the body. Believers need not only give thanks to God for food for the body. Believers need to give thanks to God for food for the soul.

Healing takes place and growth occurs when the soul is nourished. The body is sustained and grows physically when food is consumed. Partaking of food for the soul and food for the body enables balanced growth.

The Lord Jesus Christ is capable of feeding the bodies and the souls of individuals. Believers do well to think of the miracles performed by Jesus of feeding the multitudes. Jesus continues to feed the multitudes today.

In each Divine Liturgy, as believers prepare for Holy Communion throughout the world, the priests pray: “Divided and distributed is the Lamb of God: who is divided, yet not disunited; who is ever eaten, yet never consumed...”¹

¹ The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Editor L. Rev. Fr. Svetozar Veselinovich, Protonamesnik. Masontown, Pennsylvania, 1994, p. 120.

Luke 2:38-And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The Prophetess Anna had the understanding to give thanks to the Lord. She had the courage to speak to individuals seeking redemption. The Prophetess Anna shared her knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.(Lk.2:36-38)

Every person baptized into Christ has experienced Christ directly and completely. A person's identity is forever changed at the time of Holy Baptism.

The believer will always have reason to give thanks to God for Holy Baptism.

Believers always have Baptism as a point of reference throughout life. Individuals valuing their baptism and commitment to Christ will share their love and knowledge of Christ.

The Prophetess Anna is a lasting figure in history because of her unique experience. Every person conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ has a unique experience with Christ. Every believer is part of Christian history.

Christ is shared with others not only in words, but in deeds and in relationships. Deeds and relationships as well as words reveal the depth of commitment and gratitude to Christ.

Acts 27:35-And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

The Holy Apostle Paul was comfortable in giving thanks to God in the presence of others. The depth of his gratitude led the Holy Apostle Paul to thank God in a way worthy of lasting remembrance.

Each meal a person eats is a blessing from God. The Holy Apostle Paul and the individuals present with him were in a dangerous situation. Giving thanks to God and eating took on greater significance.(Acts 27:31-44)

Eating with others at times of intensity becomes memorable. Times of intensity bring God closer to mind. The willingness to give thanks to God always has a place in the life of a believer.

Paul encouraged those with him to eat for their nourishment and survival.(Acts 27:34). God gives each person life. Each life requires continued nourishment for the person to survive and thrive.

God not only gives life. God grants the nourishment for life. Individuals have the responsibility to partake of the nourishment. Individuals have the reasons to give thanks to God.

The Divine services of the Church are nourishing. Individuals seeking to survive and thrive will actively attend and participate in the Divine services. Individuals knowing of the benefits of the services give thanks to God.

The reading of the Holy Gospel and the partaking of Holy Communion nourish the participants. Individuals experiencing this nourishment have reason to give thanks with great joy.

Romans 14:6-He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and give God thanks.

Each new day is created by God. Each night is created by God. Every bit of food is created by God. Food comes into existence through the means established by God.

Attentive individuals will give thought to God as each new day unfolds. The regularity of days and nights is comforting and reassuring. Confusion would set in if the regularity of the daily cycle was disrupted.

Panic would occur if the growth process of food were nullified. Gratefulness to God has a prominent place in daily life due to the regularity existing. Believers do well to be active and conscious in considering God in all aspects of daily life.

Individuals rejecting the place of God in daily life do so at their own detriment. Joy exists in giving thanks to God. Joy exists in embracing God as the great benefactor for daily life.

Individuals recognizing the place of God in daily life and giving thanks to God come to understand more about themselves. Power resting in the human body is derived from God. Individuals do not create their own bodily power.

Individuals cannot create their own bodily nourishment. Individuals do not control the coming of each day and the coming of each night. God controls the arrival of each day and each night.

I Corinthian 11:24-And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said: “Take eat this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

The Holy Apostle Paul shared his understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Corinthians. He wanted the Corinthians to know Jesus took time to give thanks at a time of lasting remembrance.

Giving thanks to God is an act of bringing closure and finality. Giving thanks to God is an act of clear recognition of God. Failure to recognize and give thanks to God creates a sense of incompleteness and displays lack of gratitude.

When Jesus spoke of the ten lepers that were healed, Jesus made a particular point to say only one of the lepers took time to give thanks for the healing.(Lk.17:12-19) The one leper stood out among the ten as being grateful.

The Holy Apostle Paul’s inclusion of Jesus’ words of thankfulness at the breaking of the bread stirs thoughts about Holy Communion. Joy is associated with partaking of Holy Communion. Thanksgiving is associated with Communion.²

I Corinthians 15:57-But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ changed the course of history forever. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ provides every believer with a change in outlook. Hope replaces darkness. Life replaces death.

Individuals need not despair in the battle against sin. Repentance provides a basis for hope in Christ. Individuals need not despair at the approach of death. Eternal life is possible for individuals alive in Christ.

At each funeral believers learn from the Epistle and Gospel of the resurrection of the dead. At each recitation of the Creed believers confess belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Hope exists in this life for a better life. The Lord Jesus Christ said:” I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (Jn.10:10)

How can a person not want to give thanks to God?

² Ibid.,p.34.

Life takes on new meaning and strength when God is viewed as the source, creator and sustainer of life. Life takes on new meaning when God is viewed as the foundation and goal of life. Thankfulness to God abounds in these circumstances.

2 Corinthians 1:11-You also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

Prayers are beneficial. When others pray for us, we need to express our appreciation. Prayers of thanksgiving have a part in every believer's life. Believers are not to be narrow in prayerfulness, only beseeching God to be giving to them.

The thoughtful believer will seek to be united with God at all times. The thoughtful believer will rejoice in the opportunity to worship God. The thoughtful believer will always say "thank you" to God.

The Holy Apostle speaks about unity in prayer. He speaks about a common giving of thanks. Parish churches need to be grateful for the blessings enabling their existence and freedom of worship.

Parish churches need to regularly give thanks to God for parish growth and sustainability. Parish churches need to recognize and give thanks to faithful parishioners giving of themselves for the benefit of the parish.

When sufferings take place, believers often turn to God in hope. Sufferings can bring out the best in individuals. Sufferings reveal the depth of faith in God. Thankfulness to God is appropriate in times of suffering and in times of joy.

Believers do well to examine themselves to see if their prayers are narrow in focus and interest. Believers do well to examine themselves to see if their lives are free of selfish interests. God provides the good in our lives and deserves thanks.

The degree to which we give thanks to God is a measure of our lives. We can thank God all day and never fully account for all God's blessings.

2 Corinthians 2:14-Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph of Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge.

Believers have the opportunity to share Christ with others. This sharing takes place best in relationships. In the Epistle of St. John we read: "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

Thankfulness occurs when relationships are founded in God. When love is manifested in relationships, joy is experienced and gratefulness is declared. The presence of God is keenly felt in relationships based in God's love.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "You will know them by their fruits."(Mt.7:16) Relationships founded in God will yield the fragrance cited by the Holy Apostle Paul. Love will cause differences to be set aside and goodness will be revealed.

Individuals have abundant reasons to be thankful for healthy, wholesome, loving relationships. Individuals in healthy, wholesome, loving relationship are free of the impediments related to acrimony.

Power struggles in relationships reveal the absence of Christ. Christ is the supreme example of humility. Individuals working out differences in relationships do well to look to Christ. Individuals turning to Christ in sincerity will be thankful.

Ephesians 5:20-Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as the Holy Apostle Paul wants believers to pray at all times, he also wants believers to be thankful to God at all times. Believers are called to lead active lives in Christ. Sitting and resting too long stifles growth.

The Christian life is shaped by the teachings of Christ, the Holy Apostles, the saints and martyrs. The Christian life is shaped by the Divine services of the Church. An observer will find ample references to giving thanks to God.

Prayer shapes a believer's life. Giving thanks to God shapes a believer's life. Giving thanks to God involves looking beyond the self to God as the source of goodness and blessings.

When God is viewed as the center and source of goodness and blessings, God is the defining point of reference for the believer. The believer's self-image is directly affected by the believer's view of and love for God.

Hunger for the nourishment of body and soul are satisfied through the ways blessed by God. The Holy Gospel and Holy Communion provide nourishment affecting the body and soul of the believer. God is due thankfulness for both.

Earthly life is time limited. Believers need to take time throughout life to give thanks to God. It would not be a fitting ending to life to depart this life without giving thanks to the Creator and Redeemer.

The Holy Apostle Paul exhibits no reservations in giving thanks to God. He places no conditions on giving thanks to God. While there is faculty of mind and life in the body, believers do well to heartily give thanks unto God.

*Prepared for Adult Class. St. George Serbian Orthodox Church, Carmichaels, Pennsylvania. July 11/24, 2012. Holy Great-martyr Euphemia. Blessed Olga, Princess of Russia. **Father Rodney Torbic***

2 Corinthians 8:16

2 Corinthians 9:15

I Thessalonians 3:9

Hebrews 13:15

Revelations 4:9

When you pray to God in time of temptation do not say, 'Take this or that away from me', but pray like this: 'O Jesus Christ, sovereign Master, help me and do not let me sin against Thee...' *Abba Isaiah the Solitary*

One of the fathers said: There is a monastic community near Nisibis (modern Nusaybin, a Kurdish city in southern Turkey), and the superior there is a great elder. The people of the community sowed and reaped much barley and this they shared with the other monasteries. Now it so happened that a commander, coming on a diplomatic mission from Persia, met the holy elder and was greatly edified by him. He endowed the community with an income of thirty pounds of gold. The brethren rejoiced, but they became totally unconcerned so far as the property was concerned. They sowed barley as usual, but the first year the land produced nothing;

nor the second, nor the third. The brethren said to the abba, "What is going on? The earth does not produce barley like it used to." The elder said to them, "We took the thirty pounds of gold and that is why the earth does not yield its fruit. 'But go; sell all your property and give to the poor.'" The brothers did as the elder said, and the earth yielded up its fruit, and everyone glorified God. *John Moschus, Leimonarion (The Spiritual Meadow) 232, late sixth / early seventh centuries*

Almighty God has allowed His chosen to succumb to certain sins. This is so that He may restore hope of forgiveness to others, who are under sin's domination, if they will only rise up to Him wholeheartedly: for then God can open up for them the way to heaven through sorrow and repentance. Let us then embrace sorrow, let us rid ourselves of our sins by tears and 'fruits worthy of repentance.' We must not squander the time that has been granted us. We see so many freshly washed clean of the wrongs they have done: what else do we have in them except a pledge of the compassion from on high! *St. Gregory the Great*

DNA bolsters Bulgaria's John the Baptist bones claim



By Estelle Shirbon

LONDON | Fri Jun 15, 2012 10:05am EDT

(Reuters) - Bulgaria's claim to have unearthed six bones belonging to John the Baptist has received a boost from scientists who have concluded after dating them and analyzing their genetic code that they could indeed be relics of the man who baptized Jesus.

The remains, which include a molar and a piece of cranium, were found in July 2010 in a marble sarcophagus in the ruins of a medieval church on the island of Sveti Ivan, or Saint John, off Bulgaria's Black Sea coast near the resort of Sozopol.

They are on display in a church in Sozopol where thousands of worshippers have flocked to view them, untroubled by questions about their authenticity.

"When I first heard this story in 2010 I thought it was a bit of a joke, to be honest," said Tom Higham of the University of Oxford's Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit, one of the world's top laboratories for carbon dating of archaeological material.

Higham's team dated a knuckle-bone to the first century AD, when John the Baptist would have lived, while geneticist colleagues from the University of Copenhagen established the full DNA code of three of the bones.

The genetic analysis showed that the bones were from the same person, a man who most probably came from the Middle East.

Higham, who is an atheist, said that it was obviously impossible to say with any certainty that the remains belonged to John the Baptist. But it could not be ruled out.

"I'm much less skeptical than I was at the beginning. I think there's possibly more to it. But I'd like to find out more," he told Reuters on Friday.

12 HANDS AND SIX HEADS

Relics of saints or fragments of the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified, according to Christian tradition, have been a powerful draw for pilgrims and tourists for centuries. Thousands of such relics can be found in churches across Europe.

But skeptics have always dismissed these items as a scam to lure the credulous, and some joke that if all the bones said to have belonged to John the Baptist were authentic the Biblical figure would have had 12 hands and six heads.

Higham plans to apply for funding to analyze purported John the Baptist relics from other places to see if any of them came from the same individual whose remains were found on Sveti Ivan.

"I look at this as a bit of fun. I'm not a hard core ecclesiastical researcher. I actually study Neanderthals and stuff like that, older stuff," said Higham.

"But I'm really interested in applying radio carbon dating more widely to find out information about the past."

John the Baptist, who is revered in Christianity and Islam, announced the coming of Jesus and baptized him in the River Jordan. The Gospels say King Herod had him beheaded.

Oxford archaeologist Georges Kazan, who wrote his doctoral thesis on the movement of relics in the 5th and 6th centuries, said that there was historical evidence to support the claim that the Sveti Ivan remains could be authentic.

The evidence includes a small box made from volcanic tuff, or consolidated ash, which was found next to the bones and is inscribed with John's name and his feast day in Ancient Greek.

The tuff came from Cappadocia, in modern Turkey, which was one of the routes used to take purported relics from the Holy Land to Constantinople, now Istanbul, where in the 5th and 6th centuries Eastern Roman Emperors were keen to acquire them.

The emperors, who were copied by pious aristocrats, wanted relics for devotional purposes or to be buried with them.

"They were often bestowed as a sign of favor. The monastery of Sveti Ivan may well have received a portion of relics as a gift from a patron, a member of Constantinople's elite," said Kazan, adding that the island was an easy distance from the Byzantine capital on a major Black Sea trading route. *(Additional reporting by Tsvetelia Tsoleva in Sofia; Editing by Jon Hemming)*