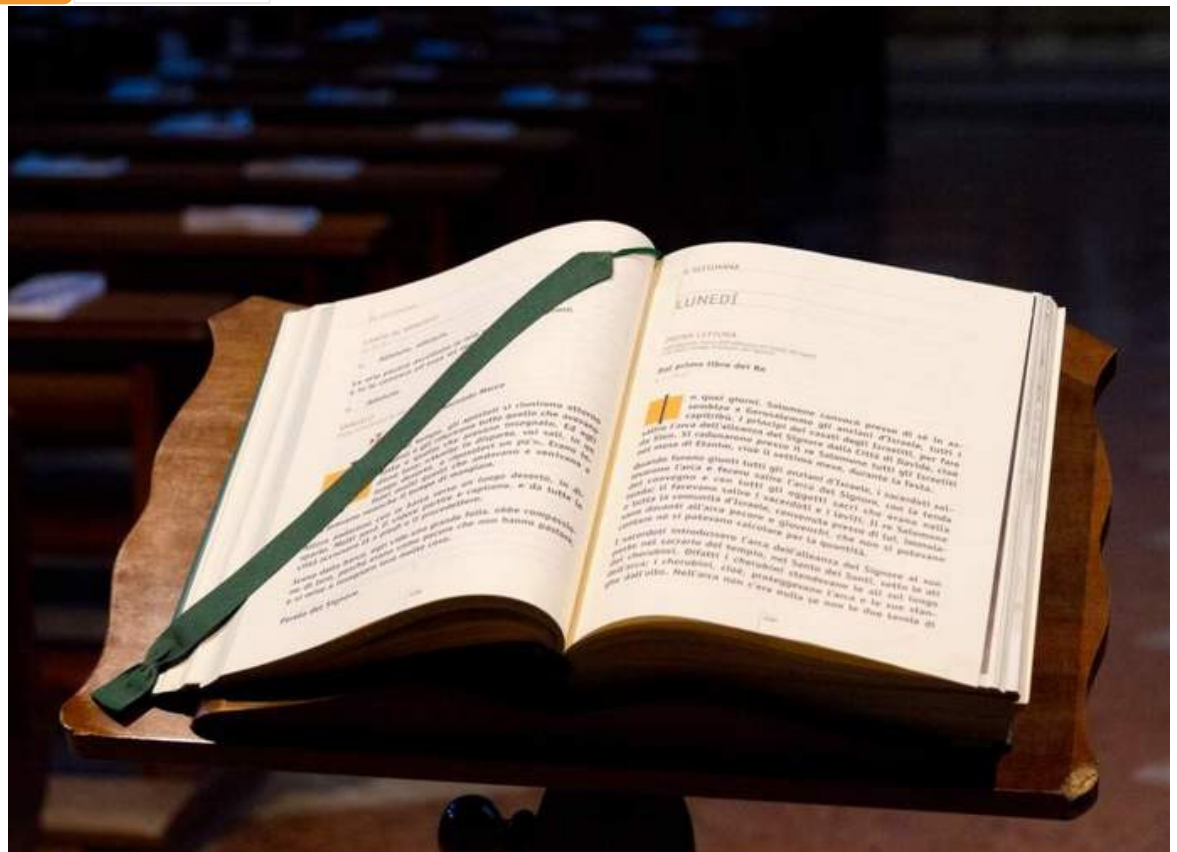


GOSPEL PEARLS

Those who persevere in sin can't stand holy people

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At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they

considered John a prophet. On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. (Matthew 14: 1-12)

Those who persevere in sin without repentance cannot stand holy people because their way of life makes it clear that temptation can be overcome. It is, therefore, not uncommon for sinners to seek to pollute a saint's purity by envy or by involving him in his own vices, even if only by asking him or her to be his accomplice or act in conspiratorial silence. If the holy person fails to do so, the sinner begins to slander him. His behaviour can escalate into higher forms of persecution that sometimes leads to murderous acts, as in the case of the *daughter of Herodias's* evil wishes for John the Baptist. Lord, help us to admire holy people so as, in turn, to admire you, who are worthy of our highest praise.