

John the Baptist

by [Philip C. Kolin](#) in the [January 13, 2021](#) issue

Out of the wilderness came this prophet of fire
and repentance, his voice a flame igniting
souls out of darkness to witness the Messiah.
Wherever he went bonfires reddened the night air.

He wore a tunic of camel hair, and a rope
cincture binding unruly flesh from
appetite; he lived on locusts and burr-
nested cones. When he entered the Jordan

it flowed east, away from the sin-crusted west.
Each wave was engraved with grace as he plunged
sinners heavy with the world's woes under
only to lift them up toward the light.
But not the Pharisees. Stones would rise sooner.

When he announced Christ passing by,
the birds of the air carried each honeyed syllable
to every open heart and sin-ridden soul.