

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-crust 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.