

St Thomas of the AirChurch  
Feast of St John  
December 27, 2020  
rmcneely+

My Little Children Love one Another  
As Christ has loved you.  
It is enough

We celebrate today the life work and example of St John, the  
Apostle of our Lord.

Our clergy receive authority from Jesus  
through the Apostolic Succession.

A doctrine that sets us apart from many other denominations.

We are ordained by Bishops

who themselves

were ordained by prior bishops

all the way back to the Apostles

who were ordained by Christ.

It is only by that ordination,

by that authority

that we may,

in the place of Jesus,

administer the sacraments,

grant absolution from sin,

consecrate the body and blood of Christ.

In the APCK, those of us ordained by Archbishop Morse and  
Archbishop Provence

trace our line of ordination directly to St John.

So John holds a special place for us

And in our hearts and lives,

And when John's feast day occurs on a Sunday it is a great  
pleasure and honor to speak of him.

We know John from the Gospels  
but get to know him more intimately  
from the Fourth Gospel  
that bears his name,  
from the three letters of John in the back of the New  
Testament. And from Revelation. John wrote them all.

We first meet John in the synoptic Gospels, those of Matthew,  
Mark and Luke.

They each tell the story of how Jesus  
at the beginning of His earthly ministry  
came to the Sea of Galilee  
and enlisted the 4 fisherman,  
Peter, Andrew, James and John.

Two sets of brothers engaged in their work supplying fish to a  
hungry land. James and John were the sons of Zebedee and  
Salome.

Jesus refers to the brothers sometimes as  
the Sons of Thunder  
a reference to the power of their faith.

Both were from Bethsaida a town on the eastern side of the Jordan  
river, where it empties into the Sea of Galilee.

Not far from the place where Joshua brought the Hebrews  
into the promised land,  
not far from where Elijah preached and was taken into  
heaven in a chariot of fire,  
and not far from where John the Baptist was baptizing and  
preaching.

John is thought to be the youngest of the Apostles  
and probably quite a bit younger than the rest.  
So he lived long after the others were dead

and as Christianity flourished  
 toward the end of the first Century  
 John was the only  
 remaining Apostle  
 for some time  
 and his presence was greatly sought after,  
 his writings cherished  
 and since he was the last person alive who was there with  
 Jesus,  
 his account of what happened was vital.

And as the inevitable early heresies cropped up, John was  
 instrumental in keeping the faith on the correct and narrow path.  
 We see this prominently in his three Epistles.

We know quite a bit about John from the Gospels. He figures  
 prominently in the major events of Christ's ministry.

In all those events,  
 Jesus selected among only 4 of the Apostles  
 to be with Him,  
 to be the witnesses.  
 And He chose John to be at every one of them;

The raising from the dead of Jarius' daughter  
 The Transfiguration  
 The agony in the garden of Gethsemane  
 Only John and Peter were sent ahead to make preparations for the  
 Last Supper  
 At the Supper itself it is John seated next to Jesus, a place of honor  
 John was 'the other Apostle' who went with Peter to the palace of  
 the High priest at Jesus trial  
 John was again 'the other Apostle, who with Peter were the first  
 Apostles to see the empty tomb  
 And of the two it was John who ran ahead and arrived first.

And when all of the other Apostles abandoned Jesus at the crucifixion out of fear for their own lives, John was the only Apostle who stood at the foot of the cross. It was to John that Jesus entrusted Mary, His mother and John was faithful to the trust until Mary's last days.

Perhaps in modest reference of himself in the third person or because of a Greek idiom

John describes himself  
as the disciple whom Jesus loved.  
In many places in the Bible.

Ancient historian Eusebius chronicles John spent the later years of his life in Asia Minor, what we now know as Turkey. And he is particularly associated with Ephesus and the church there.

John spent his later years  
caring,  
protecting  
and watching out for Mary.

She must have been in danger when Christianity was a crime. And she must have been the object of constant search  
by those who would do her harm  
and those who would harm her  
even with the best of intentions.

But she remained under the protection of John,  
hidden in Asia Minor  
and particularly Ephesus.  
until her end.

The Roman Church is convinced that Mary did not die, but was assumed into Heaven. But however her life on earth ended, John was with her.

One of the stories of Mary is that she died near Ephesus. Archbishop Morse tells a charming story of a trip he made there one Summer.

On a warm day in August  
 he went to a small obscure village on a hillside  
 not far from Ephesus  
 and happened to arrive there  
 on a day of a village festival.  
 The people processed through the streets and ended up at a  
 ancient ruin.  
 He explored the ruin  
     and found a reference in Greek  
     carved in a discarded stone to Mary.  
 He realized that the day of the village festival corresponded  
 with the day Christians celebrate the Assumption or  
 Dormition of Mary. August 15<sup>th</sup>.  
 In what I now think of  
     as a 'non-coincidence,  
     Bishop Morse was there,  
     in that place  
     on that day.  
 Christians had long since been driven from the village,  
 replaced by people who knew nothing of Mary but who have  
 maintained the festival without knowing its origin.  
 The ruin is thought to be a shrine  
     Or a small church  
     marking the place of Mary's burial  
     or perhaps her assumption  
 and the people there know nothing of it.  
 But Morse, was sent there to restore the truth of the day and place.  
 And John would have been there to hand her to God, to restore her  
 to her precious Son.  
 We know that John was exiled to the island of Patmos near the end  
 of his life.  
     An island west of Turkey in the Aegean sea  
     where John spent his last days  
     and where he was honored with the heavenly vision  
     that is his apocalyptic work: Revelation.

But in my humble view John's master work is the Fourth Gospel.  
He begins it with something of a summary of the book  
That is akin  
to an overture of a symphony  
or opera  
That provides shorten phrases that capsulize the work.

In the beginning was the Word  
And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.  
A 14 verse literary masterwork  
    in which in the Greek,  
        Each new phrase begins with the same word that ended the  
phrase before.

John's Gospel was written near the end of the first century and  
after the other three Gospels were written. So there was no need to  
include the accounts that had already been written.  
So it becomes a personal tale of John's witness  
    and his particular theology of love.

Following the Prolog, he speaks of John the Baptist, leading many  
to believe John was among those who thronged to the wilderness  
to hear the Baptist.  
He includes 7 signs or miracles and their meaning to us.

Then he moves into his first person account of the events we  
recount in holy week,  
    from the Last Supper,  
    to the arrest,  
    the trial,  
    crucifixion,  
    resurrection  
    and appearance in Galilee.

John's Gospel contains his theology,  
succinctly written in his Epistles  
that is a little different from that of the other gospels.

John writes often  
of the power  
and peace  
of the love of God.

His theology is of love.

There is an undocumented story of John.  
As you might imagine  
his presence  
was sought  
and demanded  
throughout Christendom near the end of his life.

Who would not want to hear  
from the last eyewitness to the life of Christ.  
The story goes that he agreed to give a sermon near the end of his  
life  
and at the appointed time,  
he rose  
and slowly tottered  
to the front of the assemblage.

You can imagine the anticipation  
as he drew a breath  
and the people  
in silent reverence  
did not move a muscle.

Finally John spoke  
and gave this sermon  
that summarized his life with Christ  
and all he had come to believe about Christianity.

He said,

Little Children  
Love one another  
As Christ has loved you.

The people on the edge of their seats yearned for more. And John said:

It is enough

And slowly, in short, unsteady steps he walked from the church.

It is enough . . . it is everything.

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