

ST JOHN – APOSTLE / EVANGELIST 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

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MENTION OF THE WORD “THEOLOGY” AND FREQUENTLY THE REACTION IS, “UH-OH...A LECTURE”...

FEAR NOT...this won't be a lecture though today is the feast of THEOLOGIAN #1...St John the Apostle and Evangelist, so we are going to talk a little about the matter of theology. The Greek word THEO combined with the ending OLOGY forms the word that essentially means the science/study of God.

Consider this very connected with Christmas and very connected with St John...WHO is Jesus?

Additionally, who was St John and what is his connection with Christmas and what's the theology connection...?

John was the son of Zebedee and brother of James. The brothers were fishermen and Jesus interrupted their business life by persuading them to work with him. In St Mark's Gospel they are identified by Jesus's nickname for them, BOANERGES *sons of thunder*. They reportedly had fiery tempers and readily took on the opposition!

John had a special place in the mind of Jesus...“the disciple whom Jesus loved” and it was from the cross he entrusted the care of his mother. As the church formed in years following Pentecost John ended up in Asia Minor, likely settling in Ephesus and then exiled to the island of Patmos.

John was the only Apostle not to have died a martyr's death...hence the color of his day is white...unlike red worn to commemorate all the others. John lived to be quite old for the time and it is thought that his Gospel was written about 95 AD. Though some scholarship questions the matter, he is also the author of 3 epistles and the Revelation.

What, then, is the connection with Saint John's 'school of theology' and Christmas...?

The Synoptic Gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke deal with Jesus from a largely historical perspective. The Gospel of John, while it certainly contains historical details, deals with two critical Catholic issues, WHO Jesus is and HOW he continues alive in the sacrament of Holy Communion...think WORD and SACRAMENT...a litmus test instilled in my earliest days of awareness.

If one were to retain only one page of Holy Scripture it would be the Prologue [1:1-14] to John's Gospel...this is the complete story of who God is, Jesus arriving in the world and what happened at the time and what we have left. This is why we read **The Last Gospel** concluding every Mass and it is in fact, THE Gospel reading for Christmas morning.

The Church records 20 centuries of tampering...! I was spared from this controversy until about the age of 19...then...

At the National Canterbury Club Conference, 1960 I encountered a priest who insisted the person and divinity of Jesus had to be redefined...made relevant to 'today'...

- Being somewhat impetuous, I was not bashful challenging his point of view. The debate was vigorous...and public...
- Years later I met his elder brother, also a priest, who did not want to talk about his younger brother having left the Church to embrace Buddhism!

We'll talk a bit more about my introduction to Gnosticism during this morning's [abbreviated] Discussion Group.

The matter of who Jesus is was critical then and it is critical now. Each attempt to redefine St John's teaching plunges the Church into major trouble.

St John's Gospel is at the very center of the matter of Christmas...God became a human being and dwelt among us...Emmanuel ...God with Us

Thanks to Saint John, the details are readily available...*EVERMORE AND EVERMORE*

