

St John Evangelist/I Christmas 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
I St. John 1.1-10 St. John 21.19-25

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In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought life to people. The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

Every story has a beginning. The first words of a story set the stage for what follows. The Christmas Story doesn't begin with the birth of Jesus in the Manger. We have to go back to...the beginning...before people...before history...before creation.

The Prologue...the First Words...from Saint John's Gospel...is read at the conclusion of virtually every Mass celebrated in Saint Joseph Parish. Its fourteen verses encapsulate God's activities and plans for us. It is here we first meet Jesus...*in the beginning*...with God.

Saint John calls Jesus the *Word*. The Greek *Logos* translates as *discourse, reason, and word*. The *Logos* is God active in creation, revelation and redemption. Jesus Christ not only gives God's Word to humanity...he IS the Word...the full and final expression of God.

Every story has a beginning...a middle...and ending. Sometimes we start reading a gripping novel or suspense story...and we just can't wait to skip to the end. We don't want details...we want the results. We might even say we figured that's the way the story would turn out...we didn't miss anything.

It's not possible to fully appreciate the importance of John's Gospel...and the reason we hear it read at the end of every Mass...without starting *in the beginning*. It's here we first learn about John the Baptist...the messenger who came to tell us about the Light. Jesus is the real Light...the Light that comes into the world and shines on all of us.

It is John the Baptist who pointed to Jesus at his baptism and called him the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John was chronologically six months older than

Jesus...yet he said Jesus existed before he was born. And he calls Jesus the Son of God. John could not have figured that out on his own...it was revealed to him.

It is in John's Gospel Jesus says...I am the Bread of Life...I am the Light of the World...I am the Good Shepherd...I am the door of the sheep...I am the resurrection and the life...I am the way, the truth and the life...I am the true vine, the Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine...we are the branches. All of Jesus' "I am" statements take on deeper meaning when we start...*in the beginning*.

It is in John's Gospel, Jesus gives us the new command we hear on Maundy Thursday...we are to love each other as much as he loves us. He tells us not to be sad at his impending departure back to heaven...he told us *in the beginning* this would happen...and he would send the Holy Spirit to give us strength and help us persevere.

John's Gospel is often called the most theological of the four Gospels. He doesn't spend time talking about Angels and shepherds or Wise Men from the East. He doesn't even record Jesus' birth. He expects us to already have that part of the story. He starts his Gospel...*in the beginning*...with a concise statement about Jesus...who is God's Son...the Second Person of the Trinity...who has existed with God always.

John the Evangelist...whose feast day we celebrate today...tells us he wrote his Gospel so we may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through our faith in him we may have life. And what a story it is...

...In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

...The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

John's Gospel is rich in teaching us the truth about Jesus. John wants us to read the whole story and believe. But we can't skip to the ending. To get the whole story...we have to start...*in the beginning*.

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