

Saint John Apostle and Evangelist

December 27, 2020

Follow me.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,
Amen.**

This morning we celebrate the Feast day of Our Lord's "favorite" disciple, St. John the Evangelist. We use that title, "Evangelist" to distinguish him from a host of other "John's" mentioned in Scripture. I guess I shouldn't say "favorite" but John is referred to as the "beloved" disciple. His head lay upon Our Lord's breast at the Last Supper and he has the distinction of being the ONLY disciple present at Our Lord's crucifixion. He's also known as the man inspired by the Holy Ghost to write the Fourth Gospel, as well as three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

On Christmas Day we heard that beautiful prologue of John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Today, the author of those words reiterates their importance, that is, "The One who already was in the beginning, who existed from all eternity, and who was made flesh-that is the One

whom we have heard, whom we have seen, whom we have looked on, and have touched with our hands.”

This is a testimony of the “realness” of Jesus. John says, “we” that is, John and the other Apostles, heard, saw, and touched Jesus. And in hearing, seeing, and touching Jesus, they touched God; God in the flesh.

That is the historical fact, but it is not just history. Now he says, we who were with Him, who heard, saw, and touched Him, are now proclaiming Him to you, so that you can be with us, have fellowship and communion with us, so that you can be a part of the Church established by Jesus.

What does that mean? That is, what does it mean to have fellowship with the Apostles? What does it mean to be a true Christian, to be a true member of what we professed just moments ago? To be a member of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church?

Well, John says, two things:

First, we must not think of ourselves as holy people, good people, perfect people, that is, people without sin. Put more plainly, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

And Second,

We are to dedicate our lives as Christians to turning away from sin and living a new life. John writes, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.”

He goes on to emphasize in all his writings how important it is that we make every effort to be holy; to keep the Commandments. He writes in the Second Chapter of his Gospel,

“Whoever says, I know Him, but does not keep His Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

John’s writings are replete with sayings like this. A word he uses multiple times in his lessons is the word “practice.” He uses it in speaking of ongoing, habitual, and intentional sins.

St. John calls us to holiness of living-and thus, constant repentance as we feel and experience our own unholiness-but at the same time, assures of the forgiveness and salvation found only in Jesus.

This is why through Baptism, we become followers of Jesus and know that He loves us. John is called the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” I suspect John records that not to boast, but to say, “Jesus loved even such a one as me.”

As we follow Our Lord, there is one thing that is our authority, our guide, our light: the Words of Holy Scripture. And today we hear about the things that must “soon take place...for the time is near. As we know, the Bible gives us a different view of time-a view that sees life as short, where Christ’s coming is always “soon.” It doesn’t matter if it’s two thousand years from now, or two minutes from now, we are always to be prepared.

This is all lived out in different ways for each of us. After Jesus had prophesied Peter’s martyrdom, Peter asked the question recorded in today’s Gospel: “What about him? What about John?” Jesus replied, “How does that concern you? You follow me.” As we know, St. John and St. Peter had different kinds of endings to their lives. Peter was crucified, while John was exiled to the Greek Island of Patmos. Peter and John had different “particular” callings in life, but the same overarching calling to be disciples of Jesus: “Follow Me.”

That is also our calling. It doesn’t matter if we are a priest, professor, fireman, engineer, or retired, in every place we go the words, “Follow Me” go with us.

Those words are not burdensome. For we follow the One who, at Christmas, took on our flesh and bone, our human nature, but lived

perfectly in that flesh. The One who suffered every temptation we suffer, every pain and humiliation we've experienced, and finally to die a physical death just as we all will, and is now glorified, just as we all will be.

That is the One we follow, the One who is coming again soon, for truly, the time is near.

This day we give honor for the ministry and testimony of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, who so faithfully recorded these glorious truths for us. May God pour out his Holy Spirit on us, that we may always heed John's words as a light even in the darkest of places.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.