

**ST JOHN – APOSTLE / EVANGELIST 2009  
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH  
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**

**I JOHN 1.1 JOHN 21.19 JOHN 1.1**



**MENTION THE WORD “THEOLOGY” AND  
FREQUENTLY THE REACTION IS, “UH  
OH...HERE COMES A LECTURE”!**

Relax...I promise this is won't be a lecture but 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 the matter 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 the brother of James. The brothers were fishermen and Jesus interrupted their business life by calling them as disciples to work with him. In St Mark's Gospel they are identified by Jesus's nickname for them, the BOANGERES, the 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 the years following Pentecost John ended up in Asia Minor, likely settling in Ephesus and then was 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 the 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.

If one were able to retain only one page of the Holy Scripture it would be the Prologue to John's Gospel...for it is the complete story of who God is, Jesus arriving in the world and what happened at the time and what we have left. That's why we read it at the conclusion of 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 of and divinity of Jesus had to be redefined...made relevant to 'today'...

- Being, even then, a bit 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 Discussion Group later this morning

The matter of who Jesus is was critical then and it is critical now. Every time someone has tried to change what St John teaches us, the Church has gets 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*

