

St. John Ch. 21 vs. 19b-end.

St John the Divine, Tidbury Green

Patronal Festival 28/12/25

In the gospels Simon Peter is very much in your face, so to speak. He's always asking questions and he's sometimes quick tempered and impetuous. Very different, it seems to me, is that other fisherman who left his nets and with his brother James followed Jesus. The brothers were called 'Sons of Thunder' apparently because of their passionate nature. However, I understand St John the Divine as somewhat different from that and Jesus seems to have had a great fondness for him.

I think John was quite young when he became a disciple of Jesus. The reason I say that is because depictions of him show him without a beard which would indicate his youthfulness. For instance, in the

stained-glass window at the high altar in St James he's there beardless. He's also shown as holding a chalice, reminding us of the Last Supper.

I saw a wonderful painting in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery by the German artist Lucas Cranach the Elder which was painted around 1510. It shows Jesus having been taken down from the cross. There beside him we see St John, along with Mary Magdalene and the Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Throughout his ministry Jesus chose John, with James and Peter, to be with him on momentous occasions. For instance, at his Transfiguration and when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, (Mark Ch.5). He was there also in the Garden of Gethsemane. The unnamed disciple who leaned on his Master's breast at the Last Supper and to whom

Jesus committed the care of his Mother is traditionally understood to be John.

So many remarkable things it seems to me about someone who comes across as quiet and reflective. He was a theologian and that's why he's known as 'The Divine'. The Fourth Gospel and three Epistles together with the book of Revelation bear John's name. One of the most remarkable things about him is what comes across in his writings, especially in his letters, and that is his power to communicate the **Love of God**. In fact, St Jerome wrote that when John was too old to preach, he would simply say to the assembled people: 'Love one another. That is the Lord's command, and if you keep it, that by itself is enough.' Such advice, without a doubt, still stands.

I have to say that here at St John's, over the years, that love, recommended by John, has been very

much in evidence. It was here in those past years, committed to blessed memory, when Fr Keith McMaster was here and Revds. Nicholas, Ian Robertson, Jeremy Knapp and Julie Humphries, in their turn, ministered faithfully. It has continued to manifest itself right up to this year when we celebrated one hundred years since the church opened. It manifests itself in the on-going service to the community and parish and on those coffee mornings that cheer so many people and, I can safely say, in the work that goes into the creation of the monthly magazine, the altar flowers and linen and cleaning and gardening, which altogether is such a blessing to so many. We give thanks for those who undertake the many tasks performed week by week that sustain ministry here.

So, may St John's continue to flourish, and in the name and prayers of that disciple whom Jesus loved continue to grow, as you are blessed, and as you share it with the rest of us.

Amen.