

27 December 2024 - Feast of Saint John

[1 John 1:1-4; John 20:2-8](#)

Homily

Saint John invites us to joy in his first letter, the beginning of which we read as the first reading.

If we wanted to do some advanced exegesis, we could ask ourselves whether the author of this letter, or of the Apocalypse, or even of the Gospel of John, is really the apostle John, the beloved disciple who rested on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and who faithfully stood with Mary at the foot of the cross. In reality, this does not matter, because what all these writings transmit to us is the faith of the Churches of Asia evangelized by the apostle John. Whether the texts in their final form were written by him or by his disciples is of little importance. They convey his message.

One of the most striking aspects of the early Church is the great diversity between the local Churches, each with its own identity and distinct religious sensibility. There is even a great difference between the Churches of Palestine, Syria and Asia, on the one hand, all under the influence of Johannine thought and, on the other, all the countries - let's say, broadly speaking, of the Roman Empire - under the influence of Paul. It is fitting that, immediately after celebrating the birth of the Messiah, we should hear the message of the Churches of Asia on this feast of Saint John.

In the two texts we have heard, we see an important aspect of early Christian preaching, which is not a teaching on the truths of the faith, nor even - one might say - a teaching on Christ, but quite simply the transmission of an experience. And this is entirely in line with the preaching of Jesus himself. Jesus did not give great lessons in moral theology or even dogmatic theology. He simply told us that he had a Father; and he tried to make us understand, through several parables, who his Father was; then he told us that He and His Father were united in a bond of love that He called the Holy Spirit, and He told us that we were invited to enter into this same network of love and to become one with Him, His Father and the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel, John does nothing else. He simply wants to pass on to us, not ideas or moralising exhortations, but simply his experience: 'what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what our hands have touched of the Word of life'. And he tells us quite simply that he does it so that HIS joy may be complete. Which tells us that our joy will also be complete when we share our own experience of

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Christ with our brothers and sisters and, through our lives, with the whole world.

In the Gospel we have heard, it is also the last sentence that catches our attention: ' *He saw and believed* '. It's terse. What he saw were things that could be described: bandages and a piece of linen that had covered Jesus' face. What he believed cannot be described. He simply believed. In other words, his trust and love for Christ were restored to their full intensity.

We are easily preoccupied with the joy of others, but we can only communicate the joy we have. So, like the apostle John, let us simply share through our lives our own experience of the Child of Bethlehem: what we have seen of Him, heard of Him, touched in our lives. And let us do this quite simply - I would say almost selfishly - so that *our* joy is complete. And if our joy is true, it will be contagious!

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