

Among the original twelve disciples, the most prominent two are certainly Peter and John. Peter is known for his impetuous nature and his confession when he answered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter wrote the general epistles that bear his name. But to John we credit writing the Gospel according to St. John, the three general epistles of St. John, and the Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John. It seems that as much as Peter was impetuous, John was loyal and devoted. In his gospel, he refers to himself as “the disciple Jesus loved,” and at the last supper we see him leaning on Jesus’ breast, which gives us a picture of just how intimate John’s friendship with Christ was. Though, for better or for worse, male friendships in our current culture are not so physical, and this pose is closer than we’re comfortable with, it highlights the closeness of the friendship between Christ and the Apostle John.

It appears that John is generally oriented toward relationships and toward the dealing that Christ has with others. His gospel is full of these intimate interactions. It is in the gospel of John that we read of the miracle of Jesus turning the water into wine, which contains some of the more personal details of the relationship between Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary. It also contains the account of the meeting by night with Nicodemus, of the meeting of Jesus with the woman at the well, of Jesus defending the woman caught in adultery, and the narrative of Jesus feeding the disciples a fish breakfast on the shore of Galilee after the resurrection. It was also John who stayed at the foot of the cross with the women who followed Jesus when the other disciples ran in fear. It was then that Christ commended the care of His Mother to John when He said, “Woman, behold thy son.”

In his gospel, John focuses upon “eternal life” using that phrase three times more than the other gospels. And his first general epistle, which is relatively short, uses this phrase twice as much as those other gospels. It is John who refers to Christ as the eternal Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John

also focuses upon the theme of Light: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

So all in all, John's gospel is very different from the other three gospels. It really is in a class by itself. In fact we refer to the other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as the synoptic gospels, which literally means "seen together," while John's gospel stands alone outside of this grouping.

John also is the one disciple who died a natural death. All the other faithful disciples, and the Apostle Paul, were martyred. John had expressed a willingness to die for Christ, but it was not Jesus' will that John should suffer death for His sake. John was imprisoned and exiled to the Island of Patmos before (as we believe) returning to Ephesus where he died. He was prepared and was willing to die for Christ, so that we say that he is a martyr in will, but not in deed; therefore his feast day color is white, not red.

To the Apostle John we owe a great debt. St. John brings the spiritual into our lives now. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. That Word has enlightened our minds and enlivened our hearts so that we can have the life of Christ, living into that eternal life right here, right now, every day. We are intimately connected to God the Father, in Christ, by the Spirit of God. St. John challenges us really to embrace the reality of the eternal life. Let us therefore give thanks to God for the Apostle John, for His faithfulness, and His love of Jesus, God Incarnate, as we aspire to be ever more intimate with our Lord Jesus Christ.

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