

# The Gospel of John

If you have read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke you will have noticed substantial similarities in language, stories and content providing a summary of the life of Jesus. For this reason, they are called the “synoptic” Gospels. The Gospel of John is quite different.

Sometimes called the “spiritual” Gospel because its focus is on the spiritual significance of the Good News, it is useful to be aware of how different John’s Gospel is.

This Gospel was the last to be written (around 100 A.D.), probably in Ephesus. Perhaps John did not feel the need to repeat what was already available in the Synoptic Gospels; he concentrated on the deeper meaning of the revelation in Jesus Christ. He has a very distinctive style, which is easy to identify.

**Misunderstandings and irony.** John delights in a play on words which can carry different meanings. The way Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about being born “again”; or to the woman at the well about “living water” are good examples.

**Alternatives.** John goes in for stark alternatives, thereby confronting his readers with clear choices: light or darkness; life or death; good or evil; truth or falsehood.

**Signs.** John presents miracles and healings as signs of the Kingdom. He highlights seven significant signs: 1 - the Cana wedding; 2 - the cure of the official’s son; 3 - the healing of the paralytic who had been ill for 38 years; 4 - the multiplication of the loaves; 5 - walking on the Sea of Galilee; 6 - the healing of the man born blind and finally, 7 - the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

**Discourses.** In contrast to the other Gospels, John records long reflections, meditations and even prayers of Jesus. The Last Supper conversation of Jesus stands out as an example.

Some of the speeches of Jesus give an insight into who Jesus really is (the “I am...” sayings), and his relationship with the Father.

**The Messiah.** Scholars, when speaking about who the Messiah (the Christ) really is, use the term “Christology”. John’s Christology is made clear in the opening words of his Gospel: Jesus is the pre-existent “Word” of God; “made flesh”; and commissioned by the Father to reveal the Father’s love and win people’s hearts for the Kingdom of God.

St Jerome called John’s approach to the central mystery of our faith “an eagle’s eye view”. A soaring eagle is the symbol for John. John sees the whole mystery of faith from creation to the end of time as one great revelation of glory: the glory of Father, Son and Spirit.

Given the history of the Jewish people, great care needs to be taken over John’s use of the word “the Jews”, especially concerning responsibility for the death of Jesus. It is more accurate to refer to “Jewish leaders” or “Judeans” and thus avoid any hint of anti-Semitism.

John’s Gospel remains one of the greatest treasures of revelation and an unending source of spiritual insight and growth.

For study purposes the Gospel can be divided into four sections:

1. Prologue (Chapters 1: 1-18)
2. Book of Signs (Chapters 1:19-12:50)
3. Book of Glory (13:1-20:31)
4. Epilogue (21:1-25).



Fra Angelico, detail of St John the Evangelist from the ceiling of the Niccoline Chapel, Vatican Palace

## SUNDAY MASS

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you, that your prophets be found true. Hear the prayers of your servant, and of your people Israel.

**FIRST READING:** Sirach 27:30-28:7.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:** Psalm 103.

### RESPONSE:

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy.

1. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me, his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his benefits. **R**
2. It is the Lord who forgives all your sins, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with mercy and compassion. **R**
3. He will not always find fault; nor persist in his anger forever. He does not treat us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our faults. **R**
4. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong his mercy for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far from us does he remove our transgressions. **R**

**SECOND READING:** Romans 14:7-9.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! A new commandment I give to you, says the Lord, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL:** Matthew 18:21-35.

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

How precious is your mercy, O God! The children of men seek shelter in the shadow of your wings.

## THE WEEK AHEAD

# Live the Word

### Mon 14 Sep EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 78; John 3:13-17

'Empty' is how Jesus asks us to be in relation to others and God – empty of selfishness, self-importance, the incessant need to be right, and the need to take care only of ourselves. For to be emptied is to be filled by God.

### Tue 15 Sep Our Lady of Sorrows

Hebrews 5:7-9; Psalm 31; John 19:25-27

Tradition tells us that Mary endured seven major sorrows in her life. Her sorrows were a direct result of her relationship with Jesus. What does this say about what we can expect if we directly align our lives with Jesus?

### Wed 16 Sep Ss Cornelius, P & Cyprian, B, Ms

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Psalm 33; Luke 7:31-35

Made in God’s image, God has a special place, purpose and plan for each of our lives. All that is asked of us is that we trust in God’s love and caring for each of us. Place yourself today in God’s hands.

### Thu 17 Sep (St Robert Bellarmine, BD)

1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Psalm 118; Luke 7:36-50

Only in recognising that we are broken can we open our hearts to God’s saving power and receive the gift of love. We cannot possess love or possess God without first recognising our total need before God.

### Fri 18 Sep Liturgy of the Day

1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Psalm 17; Luke 8:1-3

Many of us fit our faith into our busy lives. Not so for Jesus’ female disciples. Theirs is a life turned over to Jesus completely, and in gratitude. Who deserves the credit for my life and its blessings?

### Sat 19 Sep (St Januarius, BM)

1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-49; Psalm 56; Luke 8:4-15

Where we put our energy tells us how much we really want something. How much energy and enthusiasm do we put into our relationship with God, our faithfulness to prayer and the challenge to love unconditionally?

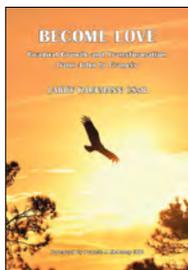
### Sun 20 Sep 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145; Matthew 20:1-16

Many people see heaven as a reward for doing good. But God’s generosity is boundless and we are all given a share in God’s love and generosity, even if we have done nothing to deserve it.

(KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial)  
P=Pope; B=Bishop; M=Martyr; D=Doctor

In his latest book Fr Larry Kaufmann presents Pope Francis’ teaching on “the law of gradualness” in personal growth, using this insight as a key to unlocking John’s Gospel. He shows how Jesus patiently accompanies individuals like Nicodemus, the woman at the well, or doubting Thomas in a gradual coming to faith, stretching them beyond their imagined limitations.



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