

DECEMBER 27, 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

The readings today put us right into the mystery of Easter, actually, and it's interesting that those readings are there, but it puts us right into the mystery of our faith, and when people come here at Manresa for retreats, for silent retreats, as they come here for say an eight day retreat or even a 30-day silent retreat, this is one of the readings they will have to contemplate on at least for one day.

It is so deep, it is beyond our understanding, and we're trying to make sense of it and no doubt the apostles also tried to make sense of it and tried to understand, but there is no understanding. It happened and we just have to accept the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, but it's good stuff to pray with, and, of course, the disciple John is not mentioned in this reading, but we all understand it was John the Evangelist, the youngest apostle, who was with Jesus. The one who lived a very long life and who was not martyred and St. John, I love him, basically, if I had to pick, but I should not, but I like him the most of all disciples, because he's the contemplative one. And the church, of course, is a big place and there's different gifts, and as strange as it sounds, we can look at him as the merry disciple.

So, you have the Martha-Mary effect, Martha who always busy, busy, busy doing things and Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus. St. Paul, he was really the Martha. He was running all over the place and going in synagogues and having big arguments with people and proclaiming the Word, which was a good thing, but we have St. John, who is the contemplative one. We don't have any account of him trying to do what St. Paul did. He's the contemplative one and people gathered around him, and he also was the one sitting a bit with the women at the cross. The only apostle at the cross, and, as we know how Jesus, from the cross

entrusted Mary, his mother, to John, and they ended up in Ephesus and where they were most of their lives, but it is there, of course, also the Johannine community probably grew with leaps and bounds, and St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Apostle, he was an inspiration to many and we can see the next generation of believers, it is like St. Ignatius of Antioch was a disciple of St. John. St. Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, who really gave their life completely even to death to the faith, and although they were not, they were not witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, but it made a great impression. They could not help but to believe, and it's interesting that the- we celebrate the Feast of Saint John the Apostle right after Christmas, only two days.

Yesterday we had St. Stephen the Martyr, the first martyr of the church, tomorrow we have Holy Innocents, all those children who gave their life, but in the middle we have St. John, the Evangelist, who was so close to Jesus and often is depicted in paintings and so on as almost like a teenager, there's no facial hair, just so young, but some historians tell us that he was born in the year six approximately, and that would have made him pretty well in his mid-20s when, uh, when he was at the resurrection. So, he was an adult already, although he's often depicted a different way, but he was already an adult who was very responsible and who was so deeply touched by what happened. And it is in the first reading from the first letter of John, it's explained to us that they're transmitting what they have witnessed, what they have witnessed, and and it goes from generation to generation how we witness what has been given to us.

I have my own, experience what happened with Jesus in my life, how God, how Jesus has touched my heart, and that's why I desire to transmit it, to give every breath I have, and this is so important, especially in our current world in our circle of society, where it is so important to transmit

our faith, and it can be done by preaching and argument and so on, but usually it's that quiet way, that contemplative way, just like St. John did, and actually I'm a little bit jealous, quote-unquote, of St. John because I love a contemplative life. However, as reality is, 70% of what I do, and many priests do, is basically administration, taking care of things, and it's very hard to have that time in a busy world to contemplate, to contemplate the mysteries, to just be with Jesus, to sit with Jesus, and the more we grow in the quietness of Jesus, in the quietness of the faith, the more we also will attract other people and it is interesting how that works, how we will meet people, and I've met them in my own life and say, "I want to have what they have," and it's not about that they said many words or arguments, it is just when we are around them we just feel that peace, that peace of Christ we cannot, we cannot buy in a store. It is that inner peace what propels us during the day through the messiness of life, and St. John the Evangelist, of course, had that in-- that incredible inner peace compared to St. Paul who always was moving around and he was doing the right thing too by moving around and always being busy, busy, busy, but St. John, the Evangelist, he had a peace of heart to gently be a witness of Christ. Amen.