

7th Saturday of Easter “The Beloved Disciple”
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John’s Gospel is entertaining in that, it feels like a product of a Christian community coming into union with the wider Church. The reason for this is because it has a different tone and flavor than Matthew, Mark and Luke. We call Matthew, Mark and Luke the synoptic Gospels because it is clear that both Mathew and Luke seem to build off of Mark. In addition, although Matthew and Luke were writing separately, it seems they also had access to an additional source that scholars have simply identified as Q, for quelle meaning “source”. The source for the Gospel of John is identified today as the Beloved Disciple. And, this is where it gets entertaining because, nowhere in the Gospel is the Beloved Disciple explicitly identified as John. He is just the Beloved Disciple. Secondly, although Peter is clearly the head of the Early Church...it is also clear that John’s Gospel, while acknowledging Petrine Primacy, nevertheless reminds everyone repeatedly that Jesus liked our founder better. The name “Beloved Disciple” kind of gives this away. And, of course you have this snippy exchange here at the end of the Gospel where Peter is put in his place. The funniest moment, for me anyways, is before this Gospel reading when Peter and the Beloved Disciple race to the tomb after they heard Jesus had been raised. It says the Beloved Disciple got there first, but waited deferentially until Peter arrives so to allow Peter to enter the tomb first. The Beloved Disciple enters in after Peter but then quickly the Gospel reminds everyone, in case you missed it the first time, the Beloved Disciple got there first. This is why John’s Gospel just simply feels like a community that is uniting now with the wider Church towards the latter part of the first century. All of these communities were tied to an Apostle who were, of course, their community’s favorite.

However, I think it is more interesting to reflect how that the Beloved Disciple is not named. The Author does this a lot in this Gospel. Examples include, the man born blind, the woman at the well, the mother of the Lord, etc. When Authors did that in antiquity, it wasn’t because they didn’t know these people’s names. The blind man was probably Bartimaeus. The Mother of the Lord is clearly Mary. As you have heard from me before, authors did this in antiquity so the reader can read themselves into the story, to become that character in their prayer life. And so, we can ask ourselves, how are we like the Beloved Disciple in the manner we live our lives? What are the ways we need to work at becoming more like the Beloved Disciple? It feels like the same question that arises in the story of Mary and Martha. There is, of course, nothing wrong with being a worker bee in the Body of Christ. Clearly, however, there is a “better part”.