



Brightness

Friday 27th December



Candles in Lourdes by Lawrence OP (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/3248043733>)

Scripture: 1 John 1.1-9

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

To reflect

Today the Anglican/Episcopalian church calendar remembers John, Apostle and Evangelist. This St John is believed to be the author of the Gospel of John and the three letters of John. The Gospel reading for today recounts Mary Magdalene discovering the empty tomb and running to tell Simon Peter and 'the beloved disciple' – John what she had found (John 20.1-8). The Epistle reading is the one above, which speaks of God is light and in God there being no darkness at all, there is some similarity to the content of John 1 which you may have heard in church on Christmas Day. The three letters of John speak of love, truth, and Christian fellowship.

Sign and symbol are strong themes in the Gospel of John – showing and shining a light of Jesus' divinity, humanity and saving grace and John in turn shines light on God's love for the world, including through Jesus – God with Us Emmanuel. Light and illumination is at the beginning of John's Gospel and first letter, and St John is the patron saint of candlemakers – amongst other groups. As we continue to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ – Light of the World, may we all see and realise the brightness of that light.

To pray – A Collect for St John, Apostle and Evangelist

Shed upon your Church, O Lord, the brightness of your light,
that we, being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John,
may walk in the light of your truth and come at last to the fullness of eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Saint John The Evangelist's Day by Emma Tuke (1866)

OH! God of mercy! chill and dark
The waters swell around Thine ark;
Send forth, we pray, fresh streams of light,
To guide her through the deepening night.

Long has she struggled 'mid the waves;
But louder now the tempest raves,
And with the world's fast closing eve,
Wilder the restless billows heave.

Fierce foes without, false hearts within,
Rebuke and conflict, shame and sin,
At once Thy sorrowing Church must brave:
O Lord! stretch forth Thine hand and save!

Let that sure word her beacon be,
The loved disciple caught from Thee,
And traced upon the holy page,
To light her on from age to age.

Oh! to that faith still keep her true;
Now 'mid the storm her strength renew;
Till, washed in blood, refined by tears,
Meet for her crown, Thy Bride appears.

To Listen (these and other suggestions can be found on a Spotify playlist at

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOtQY3q78Rj2?si=a99cbbf61e7d4587>)

- 'Exultet celum laudibus' is a hymn of praise that is appointed for chanting on St John's feast day at Lauds and Evensong. One setting is performed by Guillaume Dufay and La Reverdie.
- 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' from J.S. Bach's St John Passion (BWV 245). This is Bach's Passion based on the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.