



Meeting Jesus
in the Gospel of John

a six-week offering of prayer and reflection
from the Society of Saint John the Evangelist & the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary

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Find daily videos, group resources, and additional series content at www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

Introduction

"God Emmanuel is so palpable in John's Gospel; it invites me to be in God's presence just as I am, for good or ill, to be welcomed, provided for, sustained by Jesus. Praying with John, I feel a profound sense of not being alone." – Br. Curtis Almquist, SSJE

"What attracts me to John's Jesus is that he is an iconoclast who strikes at the very heart of those things we human beings want to cling to, yet which have absolutely nothing to do with the God that Jesus calls 'Father.' What does Jesus show us? Jesus shows us love." – Br. Robert L'Esperance, SSJE

The Gospel of John has been a source of inspiration and guidance for the Brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist since our founding one hundred fifty years ago. It is the foundation of our spirituality, and its words and images are woven throughout the text of our community's Rule of Life.

The Gospel and Epistles of John tell the story of a God who is love and who "so loved the world" that he sent

his only Son, so that we "may not perish, but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). This Son, Jesus, "became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14) in order to reveal this God of love to us (Jn 1:18), to lay down his life for us in love (Jn 10:11), and to gather us into a community of love (I Jn 4:9-11) that will share God's love with the whole world (I Jn 3:16-18).

John's Gospel invites us not only to learn about God, but also to enter into a loving and intimate relationship with God, in which God abides in us and we abide in God. In John's Gospel, we are assured that we are God's beloved children: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (I Jn 3:1). "I do not call you servants any longer," Jesus tells his disciples in John's Gospel, "but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15:15). The intimate connection which Jesus enjoys with the one he calls "Father" is the same intimate connection that is offered to us when we abide in him. "Just as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). Having received this love and allowed it to change us, we find that we are better able to love others: "We

love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). This is the message that has shaped how we Brothers have come to see ourselves in relationship to God, and in relationship to the world around us, for over one hundred fifty years. And this is the message we want to share with you. Our hope is that through this offering of daily reflections and readings you will grow closer to God and will become channels of God's love in the world.

How to Use this Offering

"When I am caught up in the trials and tribulations of life, John's presentation of the mystery of the Incarnation is what brings me through. We are tabernacles of God, called to be bearers of God. All we have to do is say 'Yes.' But first we have to know that God believes us special enough to dwell within us, so that we might bring Christ into the world for other people." – Br. Jim Woodrum, SSJE

In this six-week offering, we Brothers invite you to reflect with us on the person of Jesus, his mission and his message, as it is presented in the writings of John. In a short video each day, delivered to your inbox, an SSJE Brother will comment on a verse from the Gospel or First Epistle of John, sharing something of what this verse means to him and suggesting ways in which you might

pray with it. Each week offers six verses for reflection. We hope that on the seventh day you'll meet with a small group or a spiritual friend to share your experiences.

For Individuals: You can work through the offering on your own. Sign up for the daily email, watch the videos, and reflect on the daily verse. This journal is a place to record your thoughts (through writing, drawing or painting) in response to each day's reading. You'll find some ideas for more ways to pray on the facing page. Approach this offering prayerfully – and playfully! No two journals will be alike; make yours an expression of your truest self.

For Groups: Every Christian belongs to a community of faith (the Church), and because we learn so much from listening to one another, we strongly encourage you, if at all possible, to join a group or invite a friend to share in this offering. In your small group, you will be asked to reflect on the Gospel's message and respond in community to where and how you met Jesus that week. Additional resources are available online. Group leaders will have robust support in engaging participants in shared discussion and activities for adult and youth groups in a variety of settings. Visit the website to access leader resources or to download this journal, also available in a large-print edition.

Sign up for the daily videos and find group resources at www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

How to Use this Journal

"Through the Gospel of John, I am drawn in a very intimate way into a personal encounter with Jesus. Jesus sees me as his friend and wants to speak to me directly. The Johannine texts are an invitation into a personal relationship with Jesus, where we are known fully as we are." – Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE

The format of the journal is simple. A daily verse is provided each day, with the remaining space left open for you to express the fruits of your reflection and prayer through words or images.

There is no 'right' way to keep this journal; what you do with it is entirely up to you. Be as creative as you want to be; try to capture the ideas that are most meaningful to you, the thoughts and insights you'd like to hold onto in the days ahead.

We hope you'll choose to experience the journal alongside the daily videos in which Brothers offer suggestions for how you might pray with the verse each day. Sign up at www.meetingjesusinjohn.org, watch the daily video, ponder the verse of the day, and then write or draw whatever you want to remember.

As you reflect on the daily verse, here are some further questions you might ask yourself:

- ✎ As I read these words of Scripture, what thoughts or feelings do I notice in myself? What words or ideas capture my attention? How are my feelings engaged by this text?
- ✎ I imagine God speaking these words to me in a uniquely personal way. What might God be saying to me through this text? What implications do these words have for the way I see myself, the way I relate to God or interact with others?
- ✎ What do these words reveal about who God is, or about who Jesus is? Do they give me insight into the Divine Nature? How can they help me to better know, love, and serve God?
- ✎ What response do I want to make to these words? What prayer rises in me when I read and meditate on this text? What act of love or service might I be inspired to undertake as my response to its message?

We hope that this journal will open your heart, deepen your faith, and draw you near to Jesus in praying with the words of the Gospel of John.

week one *God is Love*

"God is Love." | John 4:16

The message of the Gospel and Epistles of John is a message of love. "God is love," states the author of First John (1 Jn 4:16), and nowhere is that love more evident than in the Incarnation of God's Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," the Gospel declares, "so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Jesus, the ambassador and revealer of God's love, gives his followers a new commandment: to love one another "just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). He is the Good Shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11), and he expects this same generous and sacrificial love to be evident among his followers. They too are ambassadors and revealers of God's love, charged with passing this gift along to others. "We love," they say, "because [God] first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). When we know ourselves to be loved deeply and unconditionally, we can love others with that same love that has been given so generously to us.

Question for reflection: *The Gospel of John reveals that I am deeply and unconditionally loved by God, just as I am. How do I respond to this?*

We believe and testify that God loves each of us boundlessly, just as we are. In daily videos, we Brothers share our personal journeys, reflecting on each day's verse and inviting your further prayers and reflections. www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

6

week one

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may know (and be assured of) God's boundless and unconditional love for us. As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to help you open your heart to God's love.

Loving God,

*I ask to experience your profound love for me;
that I may know and truly believe
that I am deeply and unconditionally loved by God
now and always, just as I am.*

7

Amen.

"...we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." 1 John 4:16

week one ☼ day one
God Is Love

8



"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16

week one ☼ day two
God So Loved the World

9

"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." I John 4:9,10

week one ☁️ day three
Love's Self-offering

10

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." John 3:17

week one ☁️ day four
That the World Might Be Saved

11



"...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12,13

week one  day five
Children of God

12

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." 1 John 4:18

week one  day six
Love That Casts Out Fear

13



"The Word became flesh and lived among us." John 1:14

Walter Brueggemann, an Old Testament scholar and theologian, defines "vocation" as "a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God." In the Fourth Gospel, it is abundantly clear that Jesus has a strong sense of "vocation," an unshakeable belief that his purpose for being in the world is part of God's mission and plan. He has come to share with us his first-hand knowledge of the God of Love, the One he tenderly refers to as his "Father." "I declare to you what I have seen in the Father's presence," he says to his disciples (Jn 5:30). "No one has ever seen God," the Gospel writer tells us, "It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18). We do well to listen and watch and learn.

Question for reflection: *What difference has it made in my life that "the Word became flesh and lived among us"?*

Sharing our love for Jesus is part of our vocation as Brothers. Watch the daily video for our reflections on the day's scripture and an invitation for your further prayer.

www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may recognize God's love as it revealed in and through Jesus, God's Son. As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to deepen your relationship with Jesus, who makes known to us the invisible God.

Jesus, image of the invisible God,

*by your words and example,
and by your divine life abiding in me,
teach me to see and know the God of Love,
whose Light and Life you came to reveal.*

Amen.



*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God." John 1:1*

week two ✨ day one
In the Beginning

16

*"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have
seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and
truth." John 1:14*

week two ✨ day two
The Word Was Made Flesh

17





"Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha ... One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?'" John 5:2, 5-6

week two ☼ day three
Jesus, the Healer

18

"If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." John 13:14



week two ☼ day four
Jesus, the Teacher

19

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world." | John 4:14

week two ^{50%} day five
Jesus, the Savior

20

"When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week ... Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." | John 20:19,20

week two ^{50%} day six
Jesus, the Risen Lord

21

week three *Close to the Father's Heart*

"It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made [God] known." John 1:18

In his Gospel, the evangelist John reveals to us the intimate union that Jesus shares with his "Father." Jesus credits all his words and deeds to the One who sent him: "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (Jn 5:19). Jesus invites us into this same intimacy and deep connection when he tells us to "abide" in him as he "abides" in us (Jn 15:4). "Apart from me you can do nothing," he insists (Jn 15:5). "Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me" (Jn 15:4). Knowing that this intimacy is *possible* is one thing; realizing that it is *essential* to our life and fruitfulness is another. It is a gift to be treasured and nurtured.

Question for reflection: *What fosters intimacy and what detracts from it, both in human relationships and in my relationship with God?*

We experience abundant life through our intimacy with Jesus. We hope this program's daily videos, available online, will deepen your reflections on the day's scripture and invite you to further prayer. www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may experience the same intimacy with God that Jesus experienced in his relationship with the One he called "Father." As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to grow in intimacy with God.

Jesus,

*just as you lived in intimate union
and daily communion with your "Father,"
so draw me to yourself in love that I may live
in this same intimacy and communion with you;
so that all that I do and all that I say may flow
from your divine life abiding in me.*

Amen.



"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." John 10:14

week three ☼ day one
Knowing and Being Known

24

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." John 15:9

week three ☼ day two
Loving and Being Loved

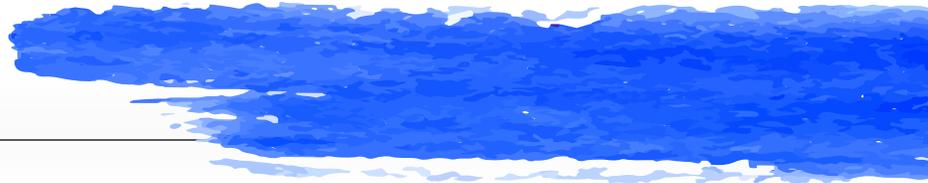
25



"The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." John 5:20

week three ☁️ day three
The Self-revelation of Intimacy

26



"Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.'" John 5:19

week three ☁️ day four
Depending on God

27



"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me." John 5:30

week three ☁️ day five
Desiring God's Will

28

"Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." I John 4:11,12

week three ☁️ day six
United in Love

29



week four *I Have Called You Friends*

"I have called you friends." John 15:15

Human beings are made in the image of God and flourish in communities of mutual support and encouragement, according to God's design. Jesus gathered around himself just such a community, and taught them to "love one another" just as he had loved them. Their connection with him was to be the source of their life and of their love for one another, and he promised them that it would yield "much fruit" (Jn 15:5). In this early Johannine Christian community, the chief mark of a disciple of Jesus was *love*, and this was modeled in a special way by two friends of Jesus – the one simply referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and the other a woman named Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus had healed. The lessons these and other early disciples teach us about living fruitful lives in union with Jesus are still crucial for us today.

Question for reflection: *Jesus has called me his friend. How does this friendship find expression in my life?*

We believe that Christian community is essential to our life with God. We hope that you will share your experience with us online, watching the daily videos and reflecting with others in the comments.

www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

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week four

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may learn from Jesus' followers what it means to live in intimate union with him. As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to deepen your union with God.

Jesus, loving Shepherd of my soul,

*grant that, as I observe and reflect
on the friendships that your disciples enjoyed with you,
I may, like them, be drawn closer to you in love.*

Amen.

31



"One of his disciples – the one whom Jesus loved – was reclining next to him." John 13:23

week four ☪ day one

The Beloved Disciple: Near to the Heart of Jesus

32



"Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'" John 20:26-28

week four ☪ day two

Thomas: Trusting in Jesus

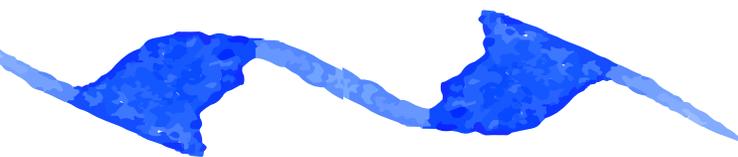
33

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'" John 21:15



week four ³⁴ day three
Simon Peter: Accepting God's Forgiveness

34



"Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." John 12:3

week four ³⁵ day four
Mary of Bethany: Demonstrating Our Love

35



"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her." John 20:18

week four ☺ day five
Mary Magdalene: Proclaiming Our Love

36

"One of the two who heard John speak and followed (Jesus) was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed)." John 1:40,41



week four ☺ day six
Andrew: Bringing Others to Jesus

37

"Abide in me as I abide in you." John 15:4

We might think of Johannine spirituality as a spirituality 'for the long haul.' According to tradition John lived well into old age. The decades he spent meditating and reflecting on what he had seen and heard bore fruit in the Gospel that bears his name. It is a theologically rich document and a literary masterpiece. A key word in the text is "abide," and this abiding is, for John, the secret to living in intimate union with God and God's Son. In Greek, the word here translated as "abide" is also translated as "remain," but it is not a static word. It does not refer to some lethargic state in which one simply bides one's time. Rather, there is a slight edge to the word that implies "sticking it out" or "hanging in there" when things get tough. Imagine what this might mean for you: to hear Jesus say, "Stick it out with me, and I'll stick it out with you." Abiding gives our lives depth, so that we are not easily shaken when trouble comes.

Question for reflection: *What qualities are essential for a spirituality 'for the long haul'? How can I sustain an intimate relationship with God over time?*

We believe that abiding in Jesus is the source of our life and our joy. We love to share that joy with others. We hope our daily videos, available online, will deepen your reflections on the day's scripture and invite your further prayer.
www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may learn to sustain a relationship of love and intimacy with God by abiding in Jesus as he abides in us throughout the whole of our lives. As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to abide with God.

Gracious God,

*the Giver and Sustainer of Life,
help me to abide in you, and to let you abide in me,
so that your life becomes my life, and your will my will,
to the glory of your Name.*

Amen.

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are." I John 3:1

week five ☼ day one
Beloved Children of God

40

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10:14,15

week five ☼ day two
Protected and Guided by Love

41



"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." John 6:51

week five ☀️ day three
Nurtured and Sustained by Love

42

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

week five ☀️ day four
Made Fruitful by Love

43



"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." John 14:15-17



week five ☼ day five
Accompanied by the Spirit

44

"Abide in me as I abide in you." John 15:4



week five ☼ day six
Abiding in Love

45

"We declare to you ... 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." 1 John 1:1

The Fourth Gospel contends that Jesus was sent into the world by the Father, to reveal the Father's love for every human being, and to invite us into the eternal life he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, we too are sent: sent to share that which has been revealed to us in and through him, sent to testify to our own experience of God's love, sent to lay down our lives in loving service for those whom God so loves and cherishes. We are witnesses, both by our words and our deeds, to the Light and Life and Love of God, which have been made known to us in Jesus, our Savior and our Joy.

Question for reflection: *God sends us into the world to declare what we have seen and heard. What is my testimony about God and God's love for the world? What is my gospel (i.e. "good news")?*

As Brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, we are called by God to testify to the life that is in us. We hope that our testimony, shared in the daily videos, will help inspire you to share your own good news, wherever God calls you to be an evangelist.
www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

suggestions for prayer

This week, we seek God's grace: that we may testify to God's love by our words and by our actions. As you read, reflect, and pray with the verses in the following pages, we invite you to use this prayer to open your heart to God's call.

Blessed Savior,

*Send me into the world, so that, like you,
I may bear witness to God's light and life.
Turn me loose, Lord, to be a channel of your love,
an instrument of your compassion,
a minister of your grace.*

Amen.



"As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." John 17:18

week six  day one
Sent into the World

48

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." I John 3:17,18



week six  day two
Serving Others in Love

49

"We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another." 1 John 3:16

week six ^{3rd} day three
Laying Down Our Lives

50

"This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true." John 21:24

week six ^{3rd} day four
The Witness of the Evangelist

51

"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." I John 1:1

week six ⁵² day five
Declaring What We Have Seen and Heard

52

"Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony ..." John 4:39

week six ⁵³ day six
Proclaiming Our Hope

53

Resources for Groups

You are invited to use this prayer journal on your own. However, we encourage you to share with others in the experience of *Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John*. Spirituality is never a private affair; it always brings us into connection with one another. As human beings made in the image of God, and members of the Body of Christ, we are called to community. Jesus invites us into loving relationships with others, and so we 'meet Jesus' as much through conversations in community as through the study of Scripture or personal experiences of prayer. Sharing in this offering with others will enrich your – and their – experience.

At www.meetingjesusinjohn.org you will find information for leading small groups, created by the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary. These resources are designed to support first-time group leaders – as well as those with more experience – in facilitating discussions. Materials for forming small groups in a variety of settings will be available, as well as activities built on each week's theme and scripture verses. For those wanting support and tips on how to run small groups, the CMT will be providing active facilitator support beginning in Epiphany and all the way through Lent. CMT leaders will offer webinars, Q&A sessions and troubleshooting for individual situations. Visit meetingjesusinjohn.org/facilitators or contact: facilitationsupport@meetingjesusinjohn.org

You will also find additional supporting materials, such as downloadable versions of this journal, including a large-print edition. Also available: resources for publicizing your small group meeting, including images and text for use in bulletins, emails, and on the web. Encourage group participants to subscribe to the daily videos at www.meetingjesusinjohn.org. Please contact techsupport@meetingjesusinjohn.org if you would like to add your whole community's email list to receive a daily email with the video from the SSJE Brothers.

Share your group's experiences, using **#meetingjesus** on your preferred social media site.

Add, read, and share comments on www.meetingjesusinjohn.org.

Use the prayer journal, videos, and participants' comments as inspiration for sermons.

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Further Resources

Brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist are men of prayer, helping people to pray their lives. Start your day with "Brother, Give Us a Word," a short daily email message from the Brothers. Dive deep into "Monastic Wisdom" and "Growing a Rule of Life." Come on retreat with the Brothers, either at our Monastery in Cambridge, or at our rural retreat house in West Newbury.

To learn more visit: www.ssje.org

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To learn more visit: www.episcopalchurch.org/jesus-movement

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Read More

“In John’s prologue, we hear whispers of Christ’s cosmic role: ‘All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people’ (Jn 1:3-4). This suggests that meaning is literally hidden in plain sight, and that Life and Light are never far beneath the surface of things. This is part of what makes John an especially illuminating path toward seeing Jesus and seeing ourselves as we read and pray with the Fourth Gospel. John wants to give us the Rosetta Stone to decipher that divine language, to make us light-bearers and life-revealers in a world hungry for meaning and thirsty for grace.”



Behold What You Are

Seeing Jesus & Ourselves in the Gospel According to John

A profound and personal reflection from Br. Keith Nelson, SSJE, on how reading and praying with John’s Gospel can allow each of us to see the ordinary, challenging, and even painful events of our lives as signs imbued with meaning.

Read the article, download or print copies:
www.meetingjesusinjohn.org

“If we only let people see that we are living upon a truth and loving it, they will soon catch the life.” – Richard Meux Benson, founder SSJE

CATCH THE LIFE

ssje.org/catchthelife

Are you willing to live your truth?
Could God be calling you to be a monk?