

John has a place of privilege at the Last Supper. At the outset of the Gospel, John told us: “The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him” (1:18). So as the Beloved Disciple sits next to Jesus for this important meal, it is more than a mere place of honor. It denotes future responsibility:

- John will also be at the foot of the cross when Jesus is crucified and asks him to take care of Mary as if she were his own mother.
- Being the youngest of the Apostles, John will outlive the others and write his Gospel at a later point in time when the church is under severe persecution. “As Jesus is uniquely able to reveal the Father by virtue of his being “at the Father’s side,” the Beloved Disciple is analogously in a unique position to testify to the spiritual meaning of Jesus by being “at Jesus’ side.”<sup>i</sup>

After the washing of the feet concludes, Jesus announces that he will be betrayed. He knows that Judas will betray him, but he does not call him out directly. He does not embarrass him in front of all of the other disciples. Privately, Jesus tells John that he will pass the morsel to Judas, his betrayer. With this subtlety, the other disciples do not understand what Judas is up to. Had they known, they might have tried to prevent him from leaving. Jesus is aware of Judas’ betrayal and dismisses him to do the dirty deed. Jesus understands that his hour has come, the hour of his passion and death can not be delayed. For the glory of God, Jesus will lay down his life. For the salvation of mankind, Jesus will offer himself as the Paschal Lamb.

Jesus has been with his disciples for three years. He is aware of their strengths and limitations. He knows them better than they know themselves. Peter is confident in his ability to undergo whatever ill fate awaits Jesus. Jesus tells him he is not. “Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times” (Jn 13:38). Sometimes failure is a powerful lesson. Peter will learn that he cannot do it all on his own. He must rely on the Lord to succeed. Jesus will return to him after the Resurrection, strengthen him with the Holy Spirit, and call him to love God by feeding his sheep.

Are we not similar to Peter in our own self-confidence? In our lives, we may be at a loss to understand our own struggles and failures. We must take time to reflect on them in the light of the love and mercy of Jesus. Relying more on God and less on ourselves, Jesus our Savior can help us grow in a similar way.

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (13:34-35). Jesus shows his love by laying down his life. After the Resurrection, the Apostles will begin their mission of sharing the Good News to the ends of the earth. In time, they too will lay down their lives for the greater glory of God through either martyrdom or as with the Beloved Disciple holding fast to the faith during a period of intense persecution. Jesus invites each of us to love through sacrifice that good may triumph over evil.

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<sup>i</sup> Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. *The Gospel of John (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)* pp. 238-239.