

SMALL GROUPS STUDY GUIDE

The Holy Gospel According to Saint John

Lesson #1

1) Some comments on the Holy Gospel According to Saint John:

--There are four Books in the New Testament called Gospels. The word "gospel" comes from a Greek Word Euangelion (**ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ** or in small letters: **εὐαγγέλιον**). Euangelion means good news, and so, the gospels are "good news."

--The Gospels (as the Catechism says) are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, Jesus our Savior.

--This Gospel is believed to have been written by Saint John the Evangelist. Papias (c. 130), an early bishop attests to this as does Saint Irenaeus (d. c. 200) who wrote, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast, himself produced his gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia."

--There are 21 Chapters in Saint John's gospel. It was believed to have been written around 95 A.D. in the City of Ephesus. That city was located in what is now modern Turkey.

– Saint John's purpose in writing his gospel was to defend the divinity of Christ against 1st century heresies. These included Judaisers who gave too high a place to Saint John the Baptist, Gnostics who believed they possessed special knowledge about the world, and Docetists who believed that Christ only appeared or seemed to be a man and thus denied the incarnation.

2) Have someone read Chapter One and then take time to discuss it. Make sure that terms are understood (for example, Word, Incarnation, Trinity, etc.). You can refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church for clarification.

- The Prologue (1:1-18) is very important. It first refers to "The Word." This is the name or title given to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God, but a name given to Him before the Incarnation.

- What does it mean to say that the Word was with God and the Word was God?

- Note the themes of darkness and light and how the world was in darkness but the Word overcame the darkness. Discuss this idea.

- Note the phrase, "The Word became flesh." Discuss what this means. The theological term for this is "Hypostatic Union." It refers to the fact that in Jesus Christ, there are two natures, one divine and the other human, both united in one person. Discuss why this is important.

- Note the role of Saint John the Baptist. In Saint Matthew's gospel it says that no one born of woman is greater than he (Mt 11:11). What does this mean?

3) The witness of Saint John the Baptist, 1:19-28

- Why does Saint John describe himself as "a voice crying in the wilderness?"

- How is the baptism of Saint John different from that of Jesus?

- Why does Saint John call Jesus, "the Lamb of God?"

4) The calling of the disciples

- Note Jesus calls Simon "Cephas" which is Aramaic for rock.