

Imitate Good

3 John

WHAT WE FOUND

The Bible's shortest book gave us three portraits at parish scale. **Gaius**: open doors and open hands for missionaries traveling *for the sake of the Name*, who took nothing from the pagans, so the whole mission ran on believers like him, and verse 8 made it doctrine: "So we ought to support such men, that we may be **fellow workers in the truth**." The supporter shares the work (CCC 863). Abraham ran to strangers at Mamre and entertained heaven (Genesis 18; Hebrews 13:2); St. Benedict built the doorway into civilization: every guest received as Christ.

Diotrephes, "who likes to put himself first" (*philoprōteuōn*, nowhere else in Scripture): accused of no heresy, only ego, and it broke a church's communion and strangled its hospitality anyway. Truth-armed people with the self enthroned become him; St. Augustine's medicine is first humility, second humility, third humility. **Demetrius**: three witnesses, including "the truth itself", a life so aligned with reality that the facts vouch for him. The finish line: become someone the truth itself would testify for. And the only command stood between them: "do not imitate evil but imitate good" (v. 11).

The harvest: written **that you may know** (5:13); God is **light** (1:5) and God is **love** (4:8); the antichrist thread resolved at the flesh of Christ (2 John 7); and fellowship (1:3) matured into fellow workers (3 John 8). The corpus ends the way the Shepherd calls: *by name*, "greet the friends, every one of them." You wrote three commitments tonight: Gaius, Demetrius, and perhaps your own table. And the aged apostle's whole theology, preserved in the tradition St. Jerome recounts of John's last days at Ephesus, goes with you: little children, love one another; if it alone is done, it is enough.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Benedict *Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 53*

Benedict legislated Gaius into the permanent structure of Western monasticism: let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for he himself will say, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Proper honor is to be shown to all, he writes, but most especially to those of the household of the faith and to pilgrims. Fifteen centuries of monastery doors have run on 3 John's economy: the stranger received, the mission provisioned, Christ welcomed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine *Letter 118*

Asked the way to truth, Augustine answered with the medicine for every Diotrephes: the first part is humility, the second part is humility, the third part is humility, and as often as you ask, so often will I answer. Not that there are no other precepts, he adds, but unless humility precede, accompany, and follow every good work, pride wrenches the whole from our hand. The love of the first place is the one disease that

turns even truth into a weapon against communion.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II *Homily at the Inauguration of his Pontificate*

The study's sending voice: Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ! John Paul spent a pontificate insisting that every baptized person is sent, that the Church exists to evangelize, and that fear must never be allowed to close the doors. The group that has walked these letters for twelve weeks now stands where he pointed: doors open, Name carried, afraid of nothing.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Execute the Gaius commitment within two weeks: the first check written, the first meal delivered, the first hours given. Fellow workers work; report back to the group member holding your date.

2.

Read all three letters of John in one sitting this month, one hour, start to finish, with your study guide margins open. You will be reading them as their first hearers could not: with the whole architecture visible.

3.

Keep the study's habit for life: one act of love in deed, not word, every day, and the aged apostle's sentence with it: little children, love one another; if it alone is done, it is enough.

MEMORY VERSE

"No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth." (3 John 4, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

There is no next session; there is a next table, and a Name worth traveling for. Execute your Gaius commitment within two weeks, keep the daily act of love in deed, and reread all three letters in one sitting this month with your margins open. No greater joy.

Catechism Connection: CCC 863; 2044-2045; 2179