

Why Masons celebrate Saints John the Baptist Day

As you know we celebrate two Saints John day, One in June, and other in December! As I was looking up information on why Masons celebrate St. John the Baptist Day it came to me that there were two Saints John of Freemasonry.

Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist are two eminent patrons of Freemasonry. As today world pressures and time is short most of us have become “Parrot Masons” Masons who become quite proficient at learning words and directions but who give little or no attention to the philosophy behind those words.

St. John the Baptist was a man of character and integrity and someone we would all do well to emulate. In him we have a singular instance of purity, of zeal, simplicity of manners. As Mason we are all familiar with the phrase “Erected to God and dedicated to the Holy Saints John” All of our Blue Lodges are so dedicated, yet we never hear any other information regarding these “Holy Saints John” or anything to explain why we refer to them as the Patron Saints of Freemasonry.

They are referenced in the Entered Apprentice Lecture as being “perfect parallels in Masonry as well as in Christianity” It is almost an afterthought of a reference, given that we dedicate every Lodge to these two men.

In early Masonry, the feast day of St. John the Baptist was always celebrated by the Craft. In fact, the first public Grand Lodge the Grand Lodge of England was born on St. John the Baptist’s day, June 24, 1717 in London England. Therefore, the Grand Lodge of England sponsored great annual celebrations of this day for

many years. Eventually the feast of St. John the Evangelist became important as well.

The four Gospels, the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as found in the Bible's New Testament, all describe this man in almost the same language. The Baptist, who was a cousin to Jesus Christ, is spoken as "A voice crying in the wilderness," whose purpose was to "Prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." He must indeed have been an important man for all four Gospels to refer to him with the same terminology, as this is extremely rare. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus himself says of John, "Among them that are born of women, there has not risen any greater than John the Baptist."

High praise indeed. It became clearer why we as Mason should hold him in such esteem. John the Baptist called the Baptist because as he preached, he baptized believers in the River Jordan lived a simple, yet powerful and devout life. He preached single-minded righteous living and change of character. His message was that one must live in a holy manner and that deviation from that manner was not acceptable.

Plato taught that for everything in creation, including people and organizations, there exists in a non-physical, ethereal subconscious otherworld a perfect form or ideal of that thing. As Freemasons, perhaps we should view the Saints John in that context. According to the Book of Law, as men we are bound to certain weakness and failures. This keeps us all from becoming ideal men and Masons, no matter how we may try. We should hold for ourselves as the perfect form or ideal of Masons the Holy Saints John. Although we know they were not Freemasons, what we know of them shows them to be perfect examples of what a Freeman should be

“ kind, righteous, loving, charitable and above all faithful unto death to the trust reposed in him. They are the Platonic form of the Freemason never to be achieved, but always to be emulated.

It is fitting that they represent these parallel lines of which we speak of in our work. But why them? Why have they always been linked to the Fraternity? Surely Masonry as we know it was not extant in the early Christian era, yet there is no period in Masonry where they do not appear. In Masonic research on the topic of the Saints John we can be sure of only one thing the concept of dedication of Lodges to them is indeed “time immemorial.” The earliest Masonic documents speak of the Saints and the “The Lodge of the Saints John at Jerusalem.”

Let for a few minutes, our minds imagine this. The ideal of what a Lodge of Masons would be if all its members achieved the ideal Masonic state of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist. Maybe we also see in that Lodge Jesus Christ as Master and the Saints John as Wardens, composing the perfect Lodge.

While I have no more information on this subject than when I started, I have hopefully shed a little more light or truth, on the “Saints John” and made the observance of Saint Johns Day a little more poignant for all Masons. Remember Freemasonry is, after all, the legend of the search for the “Lost Word” and we are charged to be the searchers.

Today we celebrate the festival, or feast day of St. John the Baptist with all the craft of the Fourth Masonic District on or near June 24.

Thanks, and have a Bless evening and Life.