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FATHER ANTON'S WORDS OF

WISDOM: This Sunday we celebrate our Parish Feast Day: the Feast of St. John the Theologian. Jesus often speaks to us of the "Golden Rule." We all heard as children from our parents and grandparents "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you." Jesus goes even further: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them." And then Jesus continues; "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, lend to others expecting nothing in return, and then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High – for He Himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful as

your Father is merciful". So much for the Old Testament's "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." (Gospel of St. Luke.) As Tevia from the movie *Fiddler on the Roof* put it "great, then the whole world would be blind and toothless! As we gather today to celebrate our parish and our patron saint, we remember that John is the Apostle of Love. In his gospel there isn't the harshness of some of the other Gospel writers, for his meditations and writings are an attempt to understand God, and this person we call Jesus – always with God – the Word – who was with God and came from God and Who is God – who came to show love and compassion to humanity, and to help them understand that first and foremost we are all God's children. Often I ask you to go home and to ask yourself why it is that you choose St. John's as your parish Church. What does your Parish mean to you? How does your Parish and your interaction with fellow parishioners make a difference in your life? I know that many years ago, in 1981 when I was doing an intern year as a seminarian at Star of the Sea RC Church in Pt. Dalhousie, I had never in my wildest imagination thought I would return to the Ukrainian Catholic Church, let alone serve it as a priest. My experience of our Church was like many others who came from a mixed marriage; not very welcoming and far too political; more interested in things "Ukrainian" than in the "Gospel." Then I received a phone call; a friendly and jovial voice on the other end – it was Fr. Walter our founding pastor with an invitation to meet at his house with a few people to discuss the formation of a new Ukrainian Catholic Church for St. Catharines. Hesitantly I accepted, and eventually decided to return to the Church of my birthright. At St. John's I found a very different community – welcoming, not judgmental, and hungry for "spiritual food." Here I felt at home. And because of this acceptance decided to leave the Roman Rite and study and return to our Ukrainian Rite. St. John's was always encouraging and offering their support and even when I was learning the bit of Ukrainian I know, was always complementing me on my efforts. Even to this day, not being fluent in Ukrainian by any stretch of the imagination, I receive that same encouragement which makes it a pleasure to serve in this parish. My answers to the above questions are simple... St. John's is not just my parish, but my family – I serve here because I love each one – even those who can be a bit abrasive at times (can't we all?) – this parish gives me life, and challenges that allows me to use the talents God has given me to the glory of His Church. My interaction with each of you, whether on Sunday, doing dishes, catering, landscaping, washing floors, cleaning toilets– no matter what the task gives us a very special bond – not just one of pastor and parishioner – but as friend as well. As we celebrate this wonderful feast and thank God for his blessings on our Parish community, let us remember that while our Church building is beautiful – it is you, its members that make it shine. Your love and dedication – your support of one another – all your hard work and your prayers are what holds us together. Bricks and mortar do not a Church make, people do... Thank you for all you are and all that you do.

I close using a part of Paul's letter to the Philippians: *"Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say rejoice! Your kindness should be evident to everyone, for the Lord is very near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, through prayer and petition, and with thanksgiving, make your needs known to God. Only then, will that peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and witnessed in my efforts. Then the God of peace will be with you."* Phil. 4:49

God Bless you all !