

or to encourage those who look upon them to practice good and avoid evil. These images are of two kinds: either they are words written in books, as when God had the law engraved on tablets and desired the lives of holy men to be recorded, or else they are material images, such as a jar of manna, or Aaron's staff, which were to be kept in the ark as a memorial. So when we record events and good deeds of the past, we use images...

Saint John Damascus's influence on later theology was considerable indeed. In the Latin Middle Ages, he was known to Peter Lombard and Saint Thomas Aquinas. All throughout the Middle Ages his works were known and widely used by Eastern Christian Theologians, especially the Slavs. He died around the year 749 AD and was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1890.

*(excerpted from: www.crossroadsinitiative.com; www.roca.org)

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Saint John of Damascus

Feast Day: March 27



Saint John is known as one of the last Fathers of the Church.

Saint John of Damascus
or
Saint John Damascene

*The life of Saint John Damascus began around 675 AD., already a generation after the area had been conquered by Muslim armies. He was born into a rich family and grew up at the court of Damascus. He succeeded his father as the official representative of the Christian community to the Muslim Caliph. He was educated as a Christian by a slave who was an Orthodox monk. A talented writer, he wielded his pen so successfully in battle against the iconoclasts that they slandered him before the Caliph, whereupon he was dismissed and his right hand cut off. It was miraculously restored after fervent prayer before an icon of the Mother of God.

Saint John then retired to the monastery of Saint Sabbas near Jerusalem, where he continued to produce an inspiring stream of commentaries, hymns and apologetical writings, including the Octoechos (the Church's service book of eight tones) and An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, a summary of the dogmatic writings of the Early Church Fathers. Eventually he became bishop of Damascus.

He is best known as one of the last of the Fathers of the Church. He was a strong defender of the use of images (icons) in Christian worship against the iconoclasts and in the book defending the Orthodox Faith, he sums up the doctrinal heritage of the earlier Greek Fathers. In this great synthesis we find a systematic treatment of the central Christian doctrines, especially the Trinity, Creation, and the Incarnation.

Saint John's treatment of the Sacraments is also extensive, and his emphasis on the real bodily presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is very strong. Notable too in his teaching is a fully developed doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary including her perpetual virginity, her freedom from sin throughout the whole of her life, and her bodily assumption into heaven.

An extract from his writings on the Divine Images relates that things which have already taken place are remembered by means of images, whether for the purposing of inspiring wonder, honor, shame,