

## Revelation 16-22

### Revelation 16

(Rev 16, 1-6) You are just, O Holy One

[1] I heard a loud voice speaking from the temple to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's fury upon the earth." [2] The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth. Festering and ugly sores broke out on those who had the mark of the beast or worshiped its image. [3] The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea. The sea turned to blood like that from a corpse; every creature living in the sea died. [4] The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water. These also turned to blood. [5] Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just, O Holy One, who are and who were, in passing this sentence. [6] For they have shed the blood of the holy ones and the prophets, and you (have) given them blood to drink; it is what they deserve."

(CCC 211) The divine name, "I Am" or "He Is", expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps "steadfast love for thousands" (Ex 34:7). By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4). By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that "I AM"(Jn 8:28 (Gk.). (CCC 2577) From this intimacy with the faithful God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Cf. Ex 34:6), Moses drew strength and determination for his intercession. He does not pray for himself but for the people whom God made his own. Moses already intercedes for them during the battle with the Amalekites and prays to obtain healing for Miriam (Cf. Ex 17:8-12; Num 12:13-14). But it is chiefly after their apostasy that Moses "stands in the breach" before God in order to save the people (Ps 106:23; cf. Ex 32:1-34:9). The arguments of his prayer - for intercession is also a mysterious battle - will inspire the boldness of the great intercessors among the Jewish people and in the Church: God is love; he is therefore righteous and faithful; he cannot contradict himself; he must remember his marvellous deeds, since his glory is at stake, and he cannot forsake this people that bears his name.

(Rev 16, 7-14) Lord God your judgments are true and just

[7] Then I heard the altar cry out, "Yes, Lord God almighty, your judgments are true and just." [8] The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun. It was given the power to burn people with fire. [9] People were burned by the scorching heat and blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues, but they did not repent or give him glory. [10] The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. Its kingdom was plunged into darkness, and people bit their tongues in pain [11] and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their works. [12] The sixth angel emptied his bowl on the great river Euphrates. Its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. [13] I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come from the

mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. [14] These were demonic spirits who performed signs. They went out to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle on the great day of God the almighty.

(CCC 678) Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgement of the Last Day in his preaching (cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3:19; Mt 3:7-12). Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (CCC 679) Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgement to the Son" (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1). Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself (Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26). By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

(Rev 16, 15-21) Behold, I am coming like a thief

[15] ("Behold, I am coming like a thief." Blessed is the one who watches and keeps his clothes ready, so that he may not go naked and people see him exposed.) [16] They then assembled the kings in the place that is named Armageddon in Hebrew. [17] The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." [18] Then there were lightning flashes, rumblings, and peals of thunder, and a great earthquake. It was such a violent earthquake that there has never been one like it since the human race began on earth. [19] The great city was split into three parts, and the gentile cities fell. But God remembered great Babylon, giving it the cup filled with the wine of his fury and wrath. [20] Every island fled, and mountains disappeared. [21] Large hailstones like huge weights came down from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the plague of hail because this plague was so severe.

(CCC 2612) In Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15). He calls his hearers to conversion and faith, but also to *watchfulness*. In prayer the disciple keeps watch, attentive to Him Who Is and Him Who Comes, in memory of his first coming in the lowliness of the flesh, and in the hope of his second coming in glory (Cf. Mk 13; Lk 21:34-36). In communion with their Master, the disciples' prayer is a battle; only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation (Cf. Lk 22:40, 46). (CCC 1243) The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15). The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father." (CCC 2849) Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus

vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony (Cf. Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-44). In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is "custody of the heart," and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: "Keep them in your name" (Jn 17:11; Cf. Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14:38; Lk 12:35-40). The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch (Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8). Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake" (Rev 16:15).

## Revelation 17

(Rev 17, 1-7) I show you the judgment on the great harlot

[1] Then one of the seven angels who were holding the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come here. I will show you the judgment on the great harlot who lives near the many waters. [2] The kings of the earth have had intercourse with her, and the inhabitants of the earth became drunk on the wine of her harlotry." [3] Then he carried me away in spirit to a deserted place where I saw a woman seated on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns. [4] The woman was wearing purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She held in her hand a gold cup that was filled with the abominable and sordid deeds of her harlotry. [5] On her forehead was written a name, which is a mystery, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." [6] I saw that the woman was drunk on the blood of the holy ones and on the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When I saw her I was greatly amazed. [7] The angel said to me, "Why are you amazed? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns.

(CCC 2450) "You shall not steal" (Ex 20:15; Deut 5:19). "Neither thieves, nor the greedy, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Cor 6:10). (CCC 2437) On the international level, inequality of resources and economic capability is such that it creates a real "gap" between nations (Cf. SRS 14). On the one side there are those nations possessing and developing the means of growth and, on the other, those accumulating debts. (CCC 2445) Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you (Jas 5:1-6). (CCC 2441) An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any *full development of human society*. This development multiplies material goods and puts them at the service of the person and his freedom. It reduces dire poverty and economic exploitation. It makes for growth

in respect for cultural identities and openness to the transcendent (Cf. SRS 32; CA 51). (CCC 2463) How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt 25:45)?

### (Rev 17, 8-13) The beast now exists no longer

[8] The beast that you saw existed once but now exists no longer. It will come up from the abyss and is headed for destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world shall be amazed when they see the beast, because it existed once but exists no longer, and yet it will come again. [9] Here is a clue for one who has wisdom. The seven heads represent seven hills upon which the woman sits. They also represent seven kings: [10] five have already fallen, one still lives, and the last has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a short while. [11] The beast that existed once but exists no longer is an eighth king, but really belongs to the seven and is headed for destruction. [12] The ten horns that you saw represent ten kings who have not yet been crowned; they will receive royal authority along with the beast for one hour. [13] They are of one mind and will give their power and authority to the beast.

(CCC 2446) St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs" (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Lazaro* 2, 5: PG 48, 992). "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity" (AA 8 § 5): When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice (St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*. 3, 21: PL 77, 87). (CCC 2438) Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give "the social question a worldwide dimension" (SRS 9). There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the "perverse mechanisms" that impede the development of the less advanced countries (Cf. SRS 17; 45). In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, "redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values" (CA 28; Cf. 35). (CCC 2439) *Rich nations* have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly.

### (Rev 17, 14-18) The Lamb will conquer them

[14] They will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and king of kings, and those with him are called, chosen, and faithful." [15] Then he said to me, "The waters that you saw where the harlot lives represent large numbers of peoples, nations, and tongues. [16] The ten horns 12 that you saw and the beast will hate the harlot; they will leave her desolate and naked; they will eat her flesh and

consume her with fire. [17] For God has put it into their minds to carry out his purpose and to make them come to an agreement to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are accomplished. [18] The woman whom you saw represents the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth."

(CCC 2440) *Direct aid* is an appropriate response to immediate, extraordinary needs caused by natural catastrophes, epidemics, and the like. But it does not suffice to repair the grave damage resulting from destitution or to provide a lasting solution to a country's needs. It is also necessary to *reform* international economic and financial *institutions* so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries (Cf. SRS 16). The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported (Cf. CA 26). This doctrine must be applied especially in the area of agricultural labor. Peasants, especially in the Third World, form the overwhelming majority of the poor. (CCC 2442) It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the *lay faithful*, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens. Social action can assume various concrete forms. It should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. It is the role of the laity "to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice" (SRS 47 § 6; cf. 42). (CCC 2463) How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt 25:45)?

## Revelation 18

(Rev 18, 1-5) Depart from Babylon my people

[1] After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth became illumined by his splendor. [2] He cried out in a mighty voice: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a haunt for demons. She is a cage for every unclean spirit, a cage for every unclean bird, (a cage for every unclean) and disgusting (beast). [3] For all the nations have drunk the wine of her licentious passion. The kings of the earth had intercourse with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her drive for luxury." [4] Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Depart from her, my people, so as not to take part in her sins and receive a share in her plagues, [5] for her sins are piled up to the sky, and God remembers her crimes.

(CCC 1723) The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement - however beneficial it may be - such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love: All bow down before wealth. Wealth is that to which the multitude of men pay an instinctive homage. They measure happiness by wealth; and by wealth they measure respectability.... It is a homage resulting from a profound faith ... that

with wealth he may do all things. Wealth is one idol of the day and notoriety is a second.... Notoriety, or the making of a noise in the world - it may be called "newspaper fame" - has come to be considered a great good in itself, and a ground of veneration (John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Saintliness the Standard of Christian Principle," in *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906) V, 89-90). (CCC 2432) Those *responsible for business enterprises* are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations (Cf. CA 37). They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of *profits*. Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment. (CCC 2435) Recourse to a *strike* is morally legitimate when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit. It becomes morally unacceptable when accompanied by violence, or when objectives are included that are not directly linked to working conditions or are contrary to the common good.

### (Rev 18, 6-10) The kings of the earth will weep and mourn

[6] Pay her back as she has paid others. Pay her back double for her deeds. Into her cup pour double what she poured. [7] To the measure of her boasting and wantonness repay her in torment and grief; for she said to herself, 'I sit enthroned as queen; I am no widow, and I will never know grief.' [8] Therefore, her plagues will come in one day, pestilence, grief, and famine; she will be consumed by fire. For mighty is the Lord God who judges her." [9] The kings of the earth who had intercourse with her in their wantonness will weep and mourn over her when they see the smoke of her pyre. [10] They will keep their distance for fear of the torment inflicted on her, and they will say: "Alas, alas, great city, Babylon, mighty city. In one hour your judgment has come."

(CCC 2450) "You shall not steal" (Ex 20:15; Deut 5:19). "Neither thieves, nor the greedy, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Cor 6:10). (CCC 2431) The *responsibility of the state*. "Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical, or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labors and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly.... Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society" (CA 48). (CCC 2463) How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt 25:45)?

### (Rev 18, 11-18) The merchants will weep and mourn

[11] The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn for her, because there will be no more markets for their cargo: [12] their cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls; fine linen, purple silk, and scarlet cloth; fragrant wood of every kind, all articles of ivory and all articles of the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble; [13] cinnamon, spice,

incense, myrrh, and frankincense; wine, olive oil, fine flour, and wheat; cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human beings. [14] "The fruit you craved has left you. All your luxury and splendor are gone, never again will one find them." [15] The merchants who deal in these goods, who grew rich from her, will keep their distance for fear of the torment inflicted on her. Weeping and mourning, [16] they cry out: "Alas, alas, great city, wearing fine linen, purple and scarlet, adorned (in) gold, precious stones, and pearls. [17] In one hour this great wealth has been ruined." Every captain of a ship, every traveler at sea, sailors, and seafaring merchants stood at a distance [18] and cried out when they saw the smoke of her pyre, "What city could compare with the great city?"

(CCC 2402) In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits (Cf. Gen 1:26-29). The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men. (CCC 2409) Even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others is against the seventh commandment: thus, deliberate retention of goods lent or of objects lost; business fraud; paying unjust wages; forcing up prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another (Cf. Deut 25:13-16; 24:14-15; Jas 5:4; Am 8:4-6). The following are also morally illicit: speculation in which one contrives to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must make decisions according to law; appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an enterprise; work poorly done; tax evasion; forgery of checks and invoices; excessive expenses and waste. Willfully damaging private or public property is contrary to the moral law and requires reparation.

### **(Rev 18, 19-24) All nations were led astray**

[19] They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and mourning: "Alas, alas, great city, in which all who had ships at sea grew rich from her wealth. In one hour she has been ruined. [20] Rejoice over her, heaven, you holy ones, apostles, and prophets. For God has judged your case against her." [21] A mighty angel picked up a stone like a huge millstone and threw it into the sea and said: "With such force will Babylon the great city be thrown down, and will never be found again. [22] No melodies of harpists and musicians, flutists and trumpeters, will ever be heard in you again. No craftsmen in any trade will ever be found in you again. No sound of the millstone will ever be heard in you again. [23] No light from a lamp will ever be seen in you again. No voices of bride and groom will ever be heard in you again. Because your merchants were the great ones of the world, all nations were led astray by your magic potion. [24] In her was found the blood of prophets and holy ones and all who have been slain on the earth."

(CCC 1033) We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Cf. Mt 25:31-46). To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell." (CCC 1034) Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost (Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather... all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" (Mt 25:41).

## Revelation 19

(Rev 19, 1-2) Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God

[1] After this I heard what sounded like the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying: "Alleluia! Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God, [2] for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her harlotry. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

(CCC 1138) "Recapitulated in Christ," these are the ones who take part in the service of the praise of God and the fulfillment of his plan: the heavenly powers, all creation (the four living beings), the servants of the Old and New Covenants (the twenty-four elders), the new People of God (the one hundred and forty-four thousand) (Cf. Rev 4-5; 7:1-8; 14:1; Isa 6:2-3), especially the martyrs "slain for the word of God," and the all-holy Mother of God (the Woman), the Bride of the Lamb (Rev 6:9-11; Rev 21:9; cf. 12), and finally "a great multitude which no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and tongues" (Rev 7:9). (CCC 2098) The acts of faith, hope, and charity enjoined by the first commandment are accomplished in prayer. Lifting up the mind toward God is an expression of our adoration of God: prayer of praise and thanksgiving, intercession and petition. Prayer is an indispensable condition for being able to obey God's commandments. "[We] ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1).

(Rev 19, 3-5) Praise our God, all you his servants

[3] They said a second time: "Alleluia! Smoke will rise from her forever and ever." [4] The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen. Alleluia." [5] A voice coming from the throne said: "Praise our God, all you his servants, (and) you who revere him, small and great."

(CCC 2099) It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion: "Every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 10, 6: PL 41, 283). (CCC 2100) Outward sacrifice, to be

genuine, must be the expression of spiritual sacrifice: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit...." (PS 51:17). The prophets of the Old Covenant often denounced sacrifices that were not from the heart or not coupled with love of neighbor (Cf. Am 5:21-25; Isa 1:10-20). Jesus recalls the words of the prophet Hosea: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13; 12:7; Cf. Hos 6:6). The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the cross as a total offering to the Father's love and for our salvation (Cf. Heb 9:13-14). By uniting ourselves with his sacrifice we can make our lives a sacrifice to God.

**(Rev 19, 6) The Lord our God has established his reign**

**[6] Then I heard something like the sound of a great multitude or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder, as they said: "Alleluia! The Lord has established his reign, (our) God, the almighty.**

(CCC 865) The Church is ultimately *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that "the Kingdom of heaven," the "Reign of God" (Rev 19:6), already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time. The kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation. Then all those he has redeemed and made "holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph 1:4), will be gathered together as the one People of God, the "Bride of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9), "the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev 21:10-11). For "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the *twelve apostles of the Lamb*" (Rev 21:14).

**(Rev 19, 7) The wedding day of the Lamb has come**

**[7] Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready.**

(CCC 757) "The Church, further, which is called 'that Jerusalem which is above' and 'our mother', is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb. It is she whom Christ 'loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her.' It is she whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom he constantly 'nourishes and cherishes'" (LG 6; cf. Gal 4:26; Rev 12:17; 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17; Eph 5:25-26, 29). (CCC 1602) Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of "the wedding-feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7, 9; cf. Gen 1:26-27). Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its "mystery," its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, its various realizations throughout the history of salvation, the difficulties arising from sin and its renewal "in the Lord" in the New Covenant of Christ and the Church (1 Cor 7:39; cf. Eph 5:31-32). (CCC 1612) The nuptial covenant between God and his people Israel had prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant in which the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united to himself in a certain way all mankind saved by him, thus preparing for "the wedding-feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7, 9; cf. GS 22).

**(Rev 19, 8) To wear a bright, clean linen garment**

**[8] She was allowed to wear a bright, clean linen garment." (The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.)**

(CCC 1234) The meaning and grace of the sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration. By following the gestures and words of this

celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person. (CCC 1243) The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15). The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father." (CCC 2642) The *Revelation* of "what must soon take place," the Apocalypse, is borne along by the songs of the heavenly liturgy (Cf. Rev 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12) but also by the intercession of the "witnesses" (martyrs) (Rev 6:10). The prophets and the saints, all those who were slain on earth for their witness to Jesus, the vast throng of those who, having come through the great tribulation, have gone before us into the Kingdom, all sing the praise and glory of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb (Cf. Rev 18:24; 19:1-8). In communion with them, the Church on earth also sings these songs with faith in the midst of trial. By means of petition and intercession, faith hopes against all hope and gives thanks to the "Father of lights," from whom "every perfect gift" comes down (Jas 1:17). Thus faith is pure praise.

#### (Rev 19, 9) Called to the wedding feast of the Lamb

[9] Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These words are true; they come from God."

(CCC 1329) The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9). The *Breaking of Bread*, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17). The *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). (CCC 1335) The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist (Cf. Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39). The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus' glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ (Cf. Jn 2:11; Mk 14:25).

#### (Rev 19, 10) Witness to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy

[10] I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Don't! I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers who bear witness to Jesus. Worship God. Witness to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

(CCC 2628) *Adoration* is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us (Cf. Ps 95:1-6) and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil.

Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory" (Ps 24, 9-10) respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God (Cf. St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 62, 16: PL 36, 757-758). Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications. (CCC 2096) Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve," says Jesus, citing *Deuteronomy* (Lk 4:8; Cf. Deut 6:13). (CCC 2097) To adore God is to acknowledge, in respect and absolute submission, the "nothingness of the creature" who would not exist but for God. To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to humble oneself, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name (cf. Lk 1:46-49). The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.

### (Rev 19, 11-16) He has a name written: King of kings

[11] Then I saw the heavens opened, and there was a white horse; its rider was (called) "Faithful and True." He judges and wages war in righteousness. [12] His eyes were (like) a fiery flame, and on his head were many diadems. He had a name inscribed that no one knows except himself. [13] He wore a cloak that had been dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God. [14] The armies of heaven followed him, mounted on white horses and wearing clean white linen. [15] Out of his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he himself will tread out in the wine press the wine of the fury and wrath of God the almighty. [16] He has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

(CCC 783) Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them (Cf. John Paul II, *RH* 18-21). (CCC 241) For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature" (Jn 1:1; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). (CCC 610) Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles "on the night he was betrayed" (*Roman Missal*, EP III; cf. Mt 26:20; 1 Cor 11:23). On the eve of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: "This is my body which is given for you." "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 22:19; Mt 26:28; cf. 1 Cor 5:7).

### (Rev 19, 17-21) Were thrown alive into the fiery pool

[17] Then I saw an angel standing on the sun. He cried out (in) a loud voice to all the birds flying high overhead, "Come here. Gather for God's great feast, [18] to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of military officers, and the flesh of warriors, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of all, free and slave, small and great." [19] Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered to fight against the one riding the horse and against his army. [20] The beast was caught

and with it the false prophet who had performed in its sight the signs by which he led astray those who had accepted the mark of the beast and those who had worshiped its image. The two were thrown alive into the fiery pool burning with sulfur. [21] The rest were killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

(CCC 1034) Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost (Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather... all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" (Mt 25:41). (CCC 1037) God predestines no one to go to hell (Cf. Council of Orange II (529): DS 397; Council of Trent (1547):1567); for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9): Father, accept this offering from your whole family. Grant us your peace in this life, save us from final damnation, and count us among those you have chosen [*Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 88].

## Revelation 20

(Rev 20, 1-8) The second death has no power over these

[1] Then I saw an angel come down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a heavy chain. [2] He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for a thousand years [3] and threw it into the abyss, which he locked over it and sealed, so that it could no longer lead the nations astray until the thousand years are completed. After this, it is to be released for a short time. [4] Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for (the) thousand years. [7] When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison. [8] He will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

(CCC 675) Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers (Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12). The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth (Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20) will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh

(Cf. 2 Th 2:4-12; 1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; I Jn 2:18, 22). (CCC 676) The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgement. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism (Cf. DS 3839), especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism (Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, condemning the "false mysticism" of this "counterfeit of the redemption of the lowly"; cf. GS 20-21).

### (Rev 20, 9-15) The dead were judged

[9] They invaded the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. [10] The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. [11] Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. [12] I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. [13] The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) [15] Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.

(CCC 677) The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection (Cf. Rev 19:1-9). The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven (Cf. Rev 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4). God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgement after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world (Cf. Rev 20:12; 2 Pt 3:12-13). (CCC 2002) God's free initiative demands *man's free response*, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy. The promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire: If at the end of your very good works..., you rested on the seventh day, it was to foretell by the voice of your book that at the end of our works, which are indeed "very good" since you have given them to us, we shall also rest in you on the sabbath of eternal life (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 13, 36, 51: PL 32, 868; cf. Gen 1:31).

## Revelation 21

### (Rev 21, 1-2) I saw a new heaven and a new earth

[1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] I

also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

(CCC 1043) Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:13; cf. Rev 21:1). It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single head "all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10). (CCC 1044) In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men (Cf. Rev 21:5). "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4).

### (Rev 21, 3-4) God himself will always be with them

[3] I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them (as their God). [4] He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, (for) the old order has passed away."

(CCC 756) "Often, too, the Church is called the *building* of God. The Lord compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the comer-stone. On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles and from it the Church receives solidity and unity. This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God in which his *family* dwells; the household of God in the Spirit; the dwelling-place of God among men; and, especially, the holy *temple*. This temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are built into it. It is this holy city that is seen by John as it comes down out of heaven from God when the world is made anew, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband (LG 6; cf. 1 Cor 3:9; Mt 21:42 and parallels; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7; Ps 118:22; 1 Cor 3:11; 1 Tim 3:15; Eph 2:19-22; Rev 21:3; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 21:1-2). (CCC 1186) Finally, the church has an eschatological significance. To enter into the house of God, we must cross a *threshold*, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called. The visible church is a symbol of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying and where the Father "will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Rev 21:4). Also for this reason, the Church is the house of *all* God's children, open and welcoming.

### (Rev 21, 5-6) Behold, I make all things new

[5] The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Then he said, "Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true." [6] He said to me, "They are accomplished. I (am) the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water.

(CCC 694) *Water*. The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified (Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8) as its source and welling up in us to eternal life (Cf. Jn 4:10-14; 7:38; Ex 17:1-6; Isa 55:1;

Zech 14:8; 1 Cor 10:4; Rev 21:6; 22:17). (CCC 1137) The book of *Revelation* of St. John, read in the Church's liturgy, first reveals to us, "A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne": "the Lord God" (Rev 4:2, 8; Isa 6:1; cf. Ezek 1:26-28). It then shows the Lamb, "standing, as though it had been slain": Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one "who offers and is offered, who gives and is given" (Rev 5:6; Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora; cf. Jn 1:29; Heb 4:14-15; 10:19-2). Finally it presents "the river of the water of life... Flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," one of most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit (Rev 22:1; cf. 21:6; Jn 4:10-14).

### **(Rev 21, 7-9) I shall be his God, and he will be my son**

[7] The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son. [8] But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death." [9] One of the seven angels who held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

(CCC 1045) *For man*, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been "in the nature of sacrament" (Cf. LG 1). Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, "the holy city" of God, "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:2, 9). She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community (Cf. Rev 21:27). The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion.

### **(Rev 21, 10-11) Jerusalem coming down out of heaven**

[10] He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. [11] It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal.

(CCC 865) The Church is ultimately *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that "the Kingdom of heaven," the "Reign of God" (Rev 19:6), already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time. The kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation. Then all those he has redeemed and made "holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph 1:4), will be gathered together as the one People of God, the "Bride of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9), "the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev 21:10-11). For "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the *twelve apostles of the Lamb*" (Rev 21:14).

### **(Rev 21, 12-14) The twelve apostles of the Lamb**

[12] It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, (the names) of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. [13] There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. [14] The wall of the city had

twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

(CCC 765) The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head (Cf. Mk 3:14-15). Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 21:12-14). The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot (Cf. Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1-2; Mt 10:25; Jn 15:20). By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church. (CCC 869) The Church is apostolic. She is built on a lasting foundation: "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev 21:14). She is indestructible (cf. Mt 16:18). She is upheld infallibly in the truth: Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops.

(Rev 21, 15-22) Its temple is the Lord God almighty

[15] The one who spoke to me held a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. [16] The city was square, its length the same as (also) its width. He measured the city with the rod and found it fifteen hundred miles in length and width and height. [17] He also measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits according to the standard unit of measurement the angel used. [18] The wall was constructed of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. [19] The foundations of the city wall were decorated with every precious stone; the first course of stones was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh hyacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. [21] The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made from a single pearl; and the street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass. [22] I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb.

(CCC 1197) Christ is the true temple of God, "the place where his glory dwells"; by the grace of God, Christians also become the temples of the Holy Spirit, living stones out of which the Church is built. (CCC 1179) The worship "in Spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24) of the New Covenant is not tied exclusively to any one place. The whole earth is sacred and entrusted to the children of men. What matters above all is that, when the faithful assemble in the same place, they are the "living stones," gathered to be "built into a spiritual house" (1 Pet 2:4-5). For the Body of the risen Christ is the spiritual temple from which the source of living water springs forth: incorporated into Christ by the Holy Spirit, "we are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16). (CCC 1048) "*We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men*" (GS 39 § 1).

(Rev 21, 23-27) And its lamp was the Lamb

[23] The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb. [24] The nations will walk by its light, and to it the kings of the earth will bring their treasure. [25]

During the day its gates will never be shut, and there will be no night there. [26] The treasure and wealth of the nations will be brought there, [27] but nothing unclean will enter it, nor any (one) who does abominable things or tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(CCC 1046) *For the cosmos*, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man: For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay.... We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:19-23). (CCC 1047) The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, "so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just," sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 32, 1 PG 7/2, 210).

## Revelation 22

(Rev 22, 1) The river of life-giving water

[1] Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

(CCC 1137) The book of *Revelation* of St. John, read in the Church's liturgy, first reveals to us, "A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne": "the Lord God" (Rev 4:2, 8; Isa 6:1; cf. Ezek 1:26-28). It then shows the Lamb, "standing, as though it had been slain": Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one "who offers and is offered, who gives and is given" (Rev 5:6; Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora; cf. Jn 1:29; Heb 4:14-15; 10:19-2). Finally it presents "the river of the water of life... Flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," one of most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit (Rev 22:1; cf. 21:6; Jn 4:10-14).

(Rev 22, 2-4) His name will be on their foreheads

[2] down the middle of its street. On either side of the river grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as medicine for the nations. [3] Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. [4] They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

(CCC 1023) Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face (1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4): By virtue of our apostolic authority, we define the following: According to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints... and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's holy Baptism (provided they were not in need of purification when they died,... or, if they then did need or will need some purification, when they have been purified after death,...) already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment - and this since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven - have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy

angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature (Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000; cf. LG 49).

**(Rev 22, 5-7) These words are trustworthy and true**

[5] Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever. [6] And he said to me, "and the Lord, the God of prophetic spirits, sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon." [7] "Behold, I am coming soon." Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book.

(CCC 104) In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God" (Th 2:13; cf. DV 24). "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them" (DV 21). (CCC 124) "The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament" (DV 17; cf. Rom 1:16) which hand on the ultimate truth of God's Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son: his acts, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church's beginnings under the Spirit's guidance (Cf. DV 20). (CCC 125) The *Gospels* are the heart of all the Scriptures "because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour" (DV 18).

**(Rev 22, 8-11) The righteous must still do right**

[8] It is I, John, who heard and saw these things, and when I heard and saw them I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. [9] But he said to me, "Don't! I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the message of this book. Worship God." [10] Then he said to me, "Do not seal up the prophetic words of this book, for the appointed time is near. [11] Let the wicked still act wickedly, and the filthy still be filthy. The righteous must still do right, and the holy still be holy."

(CCC 1427) Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism (Cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

**(Rev 22, 12-14) I bring with me the recompense**

[12] "Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." [14] Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates.

(CCC 1486) The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of conversion, confession, penance, or reconciliation. (CCC 1470) In this sacrament, the sinner, placing

himself before the merciful judgment of God, *anticipates* in a certain way *the judgment* to which he will be subjected at the end of his earthly life. For it is now, in this life, that we are offered the choice between life and death, and it is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom, from which one is excluded by grave sin (Cf. 1 Cor 5:11; Gal 5:19-21; Rev 22:15). In converting to Christ through penance and faith, the sinner passes from death to life and "does not come into judgment" (Jn 5:24).

### (Rev 22, 15) Outside are the idol-worshippers

[15] Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit.

(CCC 1852) There are a great many kinds of sins. Scripture provides several lists of them. The *Letter to the Galatians* contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21; cf. Rom 1:28-32; 1 Cor 9-10; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5-8; 1 Tim 9-10; 2 Tim 2-5).

### (Rev 22, 16) I am the root and offspring of David

[16] "I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star."

(CCC 437) To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:11). From the beginning he was "the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world", conceived as "holy" in Mary's virginal womb (Jn 10:36; cf. Lk 1:35). God called Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit," so that Jesus, "who is called Christ," should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic lineage of David (Mt 1:20; cf. 1:16; Rom 1:1; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16). (CCC 528) The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee (Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, antiphon at the Canticle of Mary). In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations (Cf. Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16). Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament (Cf. Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6). The Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini* 1-3, 5; PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third Reading) (are made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

(Rev 22, 17a) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."

[17] The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come."

(CCC 757) "The Church, further, which is called 'that Jerusalem which is above' and 'our mother', is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb. It is she whom Christ 'loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her.' It is she whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom he constantly 'nourishes and cherishes'" (LG 6; cf. Gal 4:26; Rev 12:17; 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17; Eph 5:25-26, 29). (CCC 524) When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (Cf. Rev 22:17). By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). (CCC 671) Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the King's return to earth (Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 25:31). This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover (Cf. 2 Th 2:7). Until everything is subject to him, "until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 2 Pt 3:13; Rom 8:19-22; 1 Cor 15:28). That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him (Cf. 1 Cor 11:26; 2 Pt 3:11-12): *Marana tha!* "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:17, 20).

(Rev 22, 17b) Let the one who thirsts come forward

Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water.

(CCC 694) *Water*. The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified (Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8) as its source and welling up in us to eternal life (Cf. Jn 4:10-14; 7:38; Ex 17:1-6; Isa 55:1; Zech 14:8; 1 Cor 10:4; Rev 21:6; 22:17). (CCC 2250 "The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life" (GS 47 § 1).

(Rev 22, 18-20) I am coming soon." Come, Lord Jesus!

[18] I warn everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, [19] and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book. [20] The one who gives this testimony says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

(CCC 1130) The Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord "until he comes," when God will be "everything to everyone" (1 Cor 11:26; 15:28). Since the apostolic age the liturgy has been drawn toward its goal by the Spirit's groaning in the Church: *Marana tha!* (1 Cor 16:22). The liturgy thus shares in Jesus' desire: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you... until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk 22:15). In the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life, while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13). The "Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come... Come, Lord Jesus!'" (Rev 22:17, 20). St. Thomas sums up the various aspects of sacramental signs: "Therefore a sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it - Christ's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's Passion - grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us - future glory" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 60, 3). (CCC 451) Christian prayer is characterized by the title "Lord", whether in the invitation to prayer ("The Lord be with you"), its conclusion ("through Christ our Lord") or the exclamation full of trust and hope: *Maran atha* ("Our Lord, come!") or *Marana tha* ("Come, Lord!") - "Amen Come Lord Jesus!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20). (CCC 1403) At the Last Supper the Lord himself directed his disciples' attention toward the fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God: "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:29; cf. Lk 22:18; Mk 14 25). Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns her gaze "to him who is to come." In her prayer she calls for his coming: "*Marana tha!*" "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 1:4; 22 20; 1 Cor 16 22). "May your grace come and this world pass away!" (*Didache* 10, 6: SCh 248, 180).

**(Rev 22, 21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all**

**[21] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.**

(CCC 1060) At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ for ever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life. (CCC 1061) The Creed, like the last book of the Bible (Cf. Rev 22:21), ends with the Hebrew word amen. This word frequently concludes prayers in the New Testament. The Church likewise ends her prayers with "Amen." (CCC 1062) In Hebrew, amen comes from the same root as the word "believe." This root expresses solidity, trustworthiness, faithfulness. And so we can understand why "Amen" may express both God's faithfulness towards us and our trust in him. (CCC 1063) In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find the expression "God of truth" (literally "God of the Amen"), that is, the God who is faithful to his promises: "He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth [amen]" (Isa 65:16). Our Lord often used the word "Amen," sometimes repeated (Cf. Mt 6:2, 5, 16; Jn 5:19), to emphasize the trustworthiness of his teaching, his authority founded on God's truth. (CCC 1064) Thus the Creed's final "Amen" repeats and confirms its first words: "I believe." To believe is to say "Amen" to God's words, promises and commandments; to entrust oneself completely to him who is the "Amen" of infinite love and perfect faithfulness. The Christian's everyday life will then be the "Amen" to the "I believe" of our baptismal profession of faith: May your Creed be for you as a mirror. Look at yourself in it, to see if you believe everything you say you believe. And rejoice in

your faith each day (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 58, 11, 13: PL 38, 399). (CCC 1065)  
Jesus Christ himself is the "Amen" (Rev 3:14). He is the definitive "Amen" of  
the Father's love for us. He takes up and completes our "Amen" to the Father:  
"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen  
through him, to the glory of God" (2 Cor 1:20): Through him, with him, in him,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, God,  
for ever and ever. AMEN.