

# Revelation 1-7

## Revelation 1

(Rev 1, 1-3) The appointed time is near

[1] The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must happen soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, [2] who gives witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw. [3] Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near.

(CCC 68) By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life. (CCC 69) God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words. (CCC 73) God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him. (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). 1403

(Rev 1, 4-6) To him be glory and power forever and ever

[4] John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, [5] and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, [6] who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever (and ever). Amen.

(CCC 1546) Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father" (Rev 1:6; cf. Rev 5:9-10; 1 Pet 2:5, 9). The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be... a holy priesthood" (LG 10 § 1). (CCC 2855) The final doxology, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever," takes up again, by inclusion, the first three petitions to our Father: the glorification of his name, the coming of his reign, and the power of his saving will. But these prayers are now proclaimed as adoration and thanksgiving, as in the liturgy of heaven (Cf. Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:13). The ruler of this world has mendaciously attributed to himself the three titles of kingship, power, and glory (Cf. Lk 4:5-6). Christ, the Lord, restores them

to his Father and our Father, until he hands over the kingdom to him when the mystery of salvation will be brought to its completion and God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28).

**(Rev 1, 7-8) The one who is, who was and who is to come**

[7] Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen. [8] "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

(CCC 2854) When we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past, and future, of which he is the author or instigator. In this final petition, the Church brings before the Father all the distress of the world. Along with deliverance from the evils that overwhelm humanity, she implores the precious gift of peace and the grace of perseverance in expectation of Christ's return. By praying in this way, she anticipates in humility of faith the gathering together of everyone and everything in him who has "the keys of Death and Hades," who "is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8, 18; cf. Rev 1:4; Eph 1:10). Deliver us, Lord, we beseech you, from every evil and grant us peace in our day, so that aided by your mercy we might be ever free from sin and protected from all anxiety, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. (*Roman Missal, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer, 126: Libera nos, quaesumus, Domine, ab omnibus malis, da propitius pacem in diebus nostris, ut, ope misericordiae tuae adiuti, et a peccato simus semper liberi, et ab omni perturbatione securi: expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi*).

**(Rev 1, 9) I John who share with you the distress**

[9] I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus, found myself on the island called Patmos because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus.

(CCC 769) "The Church... will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven" (LG 48), at the time of Christ's glorious return. Until that day, "the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world's persecutions and God's consolations" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 18, 51: PL 41, 614; cf. LG 8). Here below she knows that she is in exile far from the Lord, and longs for the full coming of the Kingdom, when she will "be united in glory with her king" (LG 5; cf. 6; 2 Cor 5:6). The Church, and through her the world, will not be perfected in glory without great trials. Only then will "all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect,'... be gathered together in the universal Church in the Father's presence" (LG 2).

**(Rev 1, 10-11) I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day**

[10] I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, [11] which said, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

(CCC 1133) The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it. (CCC 1166) "By a tradition handed down from the apostles which took its origin from the very day of Christ's

Resurrection, the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery every seventh day, which day is appropriately called the Lord's Day or Sunday" (SC 106). The day of Christ's Resurrection is both the first day of the week, the memorial of the first day of creation, and the "eighth day," on which Christ after his "rest" on the great sabbath inaugurates the "day that the Lord has made," the "day that knows no evening" (Byzantine liturgy). The Lord's Supper is its center, for there the whole community of the faithful encounters the risen Lord who invites them to his banquet (Cf. Jn 21:12; Lk 24:30): The Lord's day, the day of Resurrection, the day of Christians, is our day. It is called the Lord's day because on it the Lord rose victorious to the Father. If pagans call it the "day of the sun," we willingly agree, for today the light of the world is raised, today is revealed the sun of justice with healing in his rays (St. Jerome, *Pasch.*: CCL 78, 550).

**(Rev 1, 12-16) One like a son of man his face like the sun**

[12] Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands [13] and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest. [14] The hair of his head was as white as white wool or as snow, and his eyes were like a fiery flame. [15] His feet were like polished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing water. [16] In his right hand he held seven stars. A sharp two-edged sword came out of his mouth, and his face shone like the sun at its brightest.

(CCC 2519) The "pure in heart" are promised that they will see God face to face and be like him (Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God. Even now it enables us to see *according to* God, to accept others as "neighbors"; it lets us perceive the human body - ours and our neighbor's - as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty. (CCC 2531) Purity of heart will enable us to see God: it enables us even now to see things according to God. (CCC 748) "Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church" (LG 1; cf. Mk 16:15). These words open the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. By choosing this starting point, the Council demonstrates that the article of faith about the Church depends entirely on the articles concerning Christ Jesus. The Church has no other light than Christ's; according to a favorite image of the Church Fathers, the Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun.

**(Rev 1, 17-18) Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever**

[17] When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead. He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, [18] the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld.

(CCC 625) Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. The same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18): God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting*

*point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech.* 16: PG 45, 52D). (CCC 635) Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25; cf. Mt 12:40; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9). Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb 2:14-15; cf. Acts 3:15). Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades", so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10). Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began.... He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve.... "I am your God, who for your sake have become your son.... I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead" (Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday: PG 43, 440A, 452C; *LH*, Holy Saturday, OR).

#### (Rev 1, 19-20a) Are the angels of the seven churches

[19] Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards. [20a] This is the secret meaning of the seven stars you saw in my right hand, and of the seven gold lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,

(CCC 1556) To fulfil their exalted mission, "the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, and by the imposition of hands they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration" (LG 21; cf. Acts 1:8; 2:4; Jn 20:22-23; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7). (CCC 1560) As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the *solicitude for all the Churches*: "Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church" (Pius XII, *Fidei donum*: AAS 49 (1957) 237; cf. LG 23; CD 4; 36; 37; AG 5; 6; 38). (CCC 1561) The above considerations explain why the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop has a quite special significance as an expression of the Church gathered around the altar, with the one who represents Christ, the Good Shepherd and Head of his Church, presiding (Cf. SC 41; LG 26).

#### (Rev 1, 20b) Seven lampstands are the seven churches

[20b] and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

(CCC 833) The phrase "particular church," which is the diocese (or eparchy), refers to a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession (Cf. CD 11; CIC, cann. 368-369; CCEO, cann. 177,1; 178; 311, 1; 312). These particular Churches "are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these

and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists" (LG 23). (CCC 834) Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome "which presides in charity" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 1, 1: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 192; cf. LG 13). "For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 2: PG 7/1, 849; Cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3057). Indeed, "from the incarnate Word's descent to us, all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theo.*: PG 91, 137-140). (CCC 835) "Let us be very careful not to conceive of the universal Church as the simple sum, or... the more or less anomalous federation of essentially different particular churches. In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts down her roots in a variety of cultural, social, and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world" (Paul VI, EN 62). The rich variety of ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites, and theological and spiritual heritages proper to the local churches "unified in a common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided Church" (LG 23).

## Revelation 2

(Rev 2, 1-3) You cannot tolerate the wicked

[1] "To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write this: " 'The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands says this: [2] "I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors. [3] Moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary.

(CCC 397) Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of (Cf. Gen 3:1-11; Rom 5:19). All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness. (CCC 401) After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated by sin. There is Cain's murder of his brother Abel and the universal corruption which follows in the wake of sin. Likewise, sin frequently manifests itself in the history of Israel, especially as infidelity to the God of the Covenant and as transgression of the Law of Moses. And even after Christ's atonement, sin raises its head in countless ways among Christians (cf. Gen 4:3-15; 6:5, 12; Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 1-6; Rev 2-3). Scripture and the Church's Tradition continually recall the presence and *universality of sin in man's history*: What Revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience. For when man looks into his own heart he finds that he is drawn towards what is wrong and sunk in many evils which cannot come from his good creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his source, man has also upset the relationship which should link him to his last end; and at the same time he has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures (GS 13 § 1).

**(Rev 2, 4-7) You have lost the love you had at first**

[4] Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. [5] Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. [6] But you have this in your favor: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] " "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God."

(CCC 1765) There are many passions. The most fundamental passion is love, aroused by the attraction of the good. Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it; this movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy of the good possessed. The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil; this movement ends in sadness at some present evil, or in the anger that resists it. (CCC 1766) "To love is to will the good of another" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh I-II*, 26, 4, *corp. art.*). All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved (Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trin.*, 8, 3, 4: PL 42, 949-950). Passions "are evil if love is evil and good if it is good" (St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14, 7, 2: PL 41, 410).

**(Rev 2, 8-11) I know your tribulation and poverty**

[8] "To the angel of the church in Smyrna, write this: The first and the last, who once died but came to life, says this:" [9] "I know your tribulation and poverty, but you are rich. I know the slander of those who claim to be Jews and are not, but rather are members of the assembly of Satan. [10] Do not be afraid of anything that you are going to suffer. Indeed, the devil will throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will face an ordeal for ten days. Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. [11] "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The victor shall not be harmed by the second death."

(CCC 1808) *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song" (Ps 118:14). "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). (CCC 2734) Filial trust is tested - it proves itself - in tribulation (Cf. Rom 5:3-5). The principal difficulty concerns the *prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it "efficacious"? (CCC 2735) In the first place, we ought to be astonished by this fact: when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions. What is the image of God that motivates our prayer: an instrument to be used? or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

**(Rev 2, 12-17) Therefore, repent.**

[12] "To the angel of the church in Pergamum, write this: " 'The one with the sharp two-edged sword says this: [13] "I know that you live where

Satan's throne is, and yet you hold fast to my name and have not denied your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was martyred among you, where Satan lives. [14] Yet I have a few things against you. You have some people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelites: to eat food sacrificed to idols and to play the harlot. [15] Likewise, you also have some people who hold to the teaching of (the) Nicolaitans. [16] Therefore, repent. Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and wage war against them with the sword of my mouth. [17] " "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I shall give some of the hidden manna; I shall also give a white amulet upon which is inscribed a new name, which no one knows except the one who receives it."

(CCC 1429) St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him (Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17). The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!" (Rev 2:5, 16). St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance" (St. Ambrose, *ep.* 41, 12: PL 16, 1116). (CCC 1025) To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." The elect live "in Christ" (Phil 1:23; cf. Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17) but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name (Cf. Rev 2:17). For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom (St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A). (CCC 2159) The name one receives is a name for eternity. In the kingdom, the mysterious and unique character of each person marked with God's name will shine forth in splendor. "To him who conquers... I will give a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev 2:17). "Then I looked, and Lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev 14:1).

### (Rev 2, 18-23) You tolerate Jezebel who misleads

[18] "To the angel of the church in Thyatira, write this: " 'The Son of God, whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like polished brass, says this: [19] "I know your works, your love, faith, service, and endurance, and that your last works are greater than the first. [20] Yet I hold this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, who teaches and misleads my servants to play the harlot and to eat food sacrificed to idols. [21] I have given her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her harlotry. [22] So I will cast her on a sickbed and plunge those who commit adultery with her into intense suffering unless they repent of her works. [23] I will also put her children to death. Thus shall all the churches come to know that I am the searcher of hearts and minds and that I will give each of you what your works deserve.

(CCC 2353) *Fornication* is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and

education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young. (CCC 1632) So that the "I do" of the spouses may be a free and responsible act and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation for marriage is of prime importance. The example and teaching given by parents and families remain the special form of this preparation. The role of pastors and of the Christian community as the "family of God" is indispensable for the transmission of the human and Christian values of marriage and family (Cf. CIC, can. 1063), and much more so in our era when many young people experience broken homes which no longer sufficiently assure this initiation: It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise, so that, having learned the value of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to engage in honorable courtship and enter upon a marriage of their own (GS 49 § 3). (CCC 1633) In many countries the situation of a *mixed marriage* (marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic) often arises. It requires particular attention on the part of couples and their pastors. A case of marriage with *disparity of cult* (between a Catholic and a non-baptized person) requires even greater circumspection.

### (Rev 2, 24-29) To the victor I will give authority

[24] But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not uphold this teaching and know nothing of the so-called deep secrets of Satan: on you I will place no further burden, [25] except that you must hold fast to what you have until I come. [26] "To the victor, who keeps to my ways until the end, I will give authority over the nations. [27] He will rule them with an iron rod. Like clay vessels will they be smashed, [28] just as I received authority from my Father. And to him I will give the morning star. [29] "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(CCC 1896) Where sin has perverted the social climate, it is necessary to call for the conversion of hearts and appeal to the grace of God. Charity urges just reforms. There is no solution to the social question apart from the Gospel (cf. CA 3, 5). (CCC 1884) God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence. (CCC 1890) There is a certain resemblance between the union of the divine persons and the fraternity that men ought to establish among themselves. (CCC 1891) The human person needs life in society in order to develop in accordance with his nature. Certain societies, such as the family and the state, correspond more directly to the nature of man. (CCC 1892) "The human person... is and ought to be the principle, the subject, and the object of every social organization" (GS 25 § 1). (CCC 1881) Each community is defined by its purpose and consequently obeys specific rules; but "the *human person*... is and ought to be the principle, the subject and the end of all social institutions" (GS 25 § 1). (CCC 1893) Widespread participation in voluntary associations and institutions is to be encouraged. (CCC 1894) In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, neither the state nor any larger society should substitute itself for the initiative and

responsibility of individuals and intermediary bodies. (CCC 1895) Society ought to promote the exercise of virtue, not obstruct it. It should be animated by a just hierarchy of values.

## Revelation 3

(Rev 3, 1-6) I have not found your works complete

[1] "To the angel of the church in Sardis, write this:" The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this: "I know your works, that you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. [2] Be watchful and strengthen what is left, which is going to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. [3] Remember then how you accepted and heard; keep it, and repent. If you are not watchful, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come upon you. [4] However, you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; they will walk with me dressed in white, because they are worthy." [5]"The victor will thus be dressed in white, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name in the presence of my Father and of his angels." [6]"Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(CCC 1709) He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven. (CCC 825) "The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect" (LG 48 § 3). In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired: "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state - though each in his own way - are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect" (LG 11 § 3). (CCC 2013) "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 § 2). All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints (LG 40 § 2). (CCC 2028) "All Christians... are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 § 2). "Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Mos.*: PG 44, 300D).

(Rev 3, 7-13) You have kept my message of endurance

[7] "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write this: " 'The holy one, the true, who holds the key of David, who opens and no one shall close, who closes and no one shall open, says this: [8] " "'I know your works (behold, I have left an open door before you, which no one can close). You have limited strength, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. [9] Behold, I will make those of the assembly of

Satan who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying, behold I will make them come and fall prostrate at your feet, and they will realize that I love you. [10] Because you have kept my message of endurance, I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. [11] I am coming quickly. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one may take your crown. [12] " "The victor I will make into a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never leave it again. On him I will inscribe the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, as well as my new name. [13] " "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(CCC 2848) "Lead us not into temptation" implies a *decision of the heart*: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.... No one can serve two masters" (Mt 6:21, 24). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). In this assent to the Holy Spirit the Father gives us strength. "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor 10:13). (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). (CCC 2847) The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man (Cf. Lk. 8:13-15; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3-5; 2 Tim 3:12), and temptation, which leads to sin and death (Cf. Jas 1:14-15). We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmask the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable (Cf. Gen 3:6), when in reality its fruit is death. God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.... There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us (Origen, *De orat.* 29 PG 11, 544CD).

(Rev 3, 14-18) You are neither cold nor hot

[14] "To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write this: " 'The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God's creation, says this: [15] "I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. [16] So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. [17] For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. [18] I advise you to buy from

me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see.

(CCC 1965) The New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural and revealed. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit and through him it becomes the interior law of charity: "I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Heb 8:8, 10; cf. Jer 31:31-34). (CCC 2094) One can sin against God's love in various ways: - *indifference* neglects or refuses to reflect on divine charity; it fails to consider its prevenient goodness and denies its power. - *ingratitude* fails or refuses to acknowledge divine charity and to return him love for love. - *lukewarmness* is hesitation or negligence in responding to divine love; it can imply refusal to give oneself over to the prompting of charity. - *acedia* or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness. - *hatred of God* comes from pride. It is contrary to love of God, whose goodness it denies, and whom it presumes to curse as the one who forbids sins and inflicts punishments. (CCC 1634) Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, when they succeed in placing in common what they have received from their respective communities, and learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ. But the difficulties of mixed marriages must not be underestimated. They arise from the fact that the separation of Christians has not yet been overcome. The spouses risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home. Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. The temptation to religious indifference can then arise.

**(Rev 3, 19-22) The victor will sit with me on my throne**

[19] Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. [20] "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. [21] I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne." [22] "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(CCC 2093) Faith in God's love encompasses the call and the obligation to respond with sincere love to divine charity. The first commandment enjoins us to love God above everything and all creatures for him and because of him (Cf. Deut 6:4-5). (CCC 2128) Agnosticism can sometimes include a certain search for God, but it can equally express indifferentism, a flight from the ultimate question of existence, and a sluggish moral conscience. Agnosticism is all too often equivalent to practical atheism. (CCC 1635) According to the law in force in the Latin Church, a mixed marriage needs for liceity the *express permission* of ecclesiastical authority (Cf. CIC, can. 1124). In case of disparity of cult an *express dispensation* from this impediment is required for the validity of the marriage (Cf. CIC, can. 1086). This permission or dispensation presupposes that

both parties know and do not exclude the essential ends and properties of marriage; and furthermore that the Catholic party confirms the obligations, which have been made known to the non-Catholic party, of preserving his or her own faith and ensuring the baptism and education of the children in the Catholic Church (cf. CIC, can. 1125). (CCC 1536) Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.

## Revelation 4

(Rev 4, 1-6) I had a vision of an open door to heaven

[1] After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpetlike voice that had spoken to me before, saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards." [2] At once I was caught up in spirit. A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat [3] one whose appearance sparkled like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald. [4] Surrounding the throne I saw twenty-four other thrones on which twenty-four elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads. [5] From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. [6] In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal. In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back.

(CCC 1139) It is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments. (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). (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 663) Henceforth Christ is *seated at the right hand of the Father*: "By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honour of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified" (St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 4, 2: PG 94, 1104C). (CCC 664) Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the

fulfilment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:14). After this event the apostles became witnesses of the "kingdom [that] will have no end" (Nicene Creed).

### (Rev 4, 7-11) Who was, and who is, and who is to come

[7] The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight. [8] The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." [9] Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] the twenty-four elders fall down before the one who sits on the throne and worship him, who lives forever and ever. They throw down their crowns before the throne, exclaiming: [11] "Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created."

(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. (CCC 2855) The final doxology, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever," takes up again, by inclusion, the first three petitions to our Father: the glorification of his name, the coming of his reign, and the power of his saving will. But these prayers are now proclaimed as adoration and thanksgiving, as in the liturgy of heaven (Cf. Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:13). The ruler of this world has mendaciously attributed to himself the three titles of kingship, power, and glory (Cf. Lk 4:5-6). Christ, the Lord, restores them to his Father and our Father, until he hands over the kingdom to him when the mystery of salvation will be brought to its completion and God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28). (CCC 295) We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom (Cf. Wis 9:9). It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: "For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev 4:11). Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all"; and "The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made" (Pss 104:24; 145:9).

## Revelation 5

(Rev 5, 1-5) The root of David open the scroll with its seals

[1] I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. [2] Then I saw a mighty angel who proclaimed in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" [3] But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to examine it. [4] I shed many tears because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to examine it. [5] One of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, enabling him to open the scroll with its seven seals."

(CCC 662) "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12:32). The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, "entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands... But into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24). There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he "always lives to make intercession" for "those who draw near to God through him" (Heb 7:25). As "high priest of the good things to come" he is the centre and the principal actor of the liturgy that honours the Father in heaven (Heb 9:11; cf. Rev 4:6-11).

(Rev 5, 6-10) Priests for our God will reign on earth

[6] Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been slain. He had seven horns and seven eyes; these are the (seven) spirits of God sent out into the whole world. [7] He came and received the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. [8] When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones. [9] They sang a new hymn: "Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God those from every tribe and tongue, people and nation. [10] You made them a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will reign on earth."

(CCC 1545) The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Hebr* 8, 4). (CCC 1373) "Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church (Rom 8:34; cf. LG 48): in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in my name" (Mt 18:20), in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned (Cf. Mt 25:31-46), in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But "he is present... most especially in the Eucharistic species" (SC 7).

(Rev 5, 11-14) To the Lamb be blessing, honor, glory

[11] I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, [12] and they cried out in a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." [13] Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever." [14] The four living creatures answered, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

(CCC 449) By attributing to Jesus the divine title "Lord", the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honour and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because "he was in the form of God" (Cf. Acts 2:34 - 36; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Rev 5:13; Phil 2:6), and the Father manifested the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting him into his glory (Cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11). (CCC 2864) In the last petition, "but deliver us from evil," Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the "ruler of this world," Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation.

## Revelation 6

(Rev 6, 1-8) the Lamb broke open the first seal

[1] Then I watched while the Lamb broke open the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures cry out in a voice like thunder, "Come forward." [2] I looked, and there was a white horse, and its rider had a bow. He was given a crown, and he rode forth victorious to further his victories. [3] When he broke open the second seal, I heard the second living creature cry out, "Come forward." [4] Another horse came out, a red one. Its rider was given power to take peace away from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And he was given a huge sword. [5] When he broke open the third seal, I heard the third living creature cry out, "Come forward." I looked, and there was a black horse, and its rider held a scale in his hand. [6] I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures. It said, "A ration of wheat costs a day's pay, and three rations of barley cost a day's pay. But do not damage the olive oil or the wine." [7] When he broke open the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature cry out, "Come forward." [8] I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades accompanied him. They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and plague, and by means of the beasts of the earth.

(CCC 1040) The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment

will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Cf. *Song* 8:6).

### (Rev 6, 9-17) How long will it be before you sit in judgment

[9] When he broke open the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God. [10] They cried out in a loud voice, "How long will it be, holy and true master, before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" [11] Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little while longer until the number was filled of their fellow servants and brothers who were going to be killed as they had been. [12] Then I watched while he broke open the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; the sun turned as black as dark sackcloth and the whole moon became like blood. [13] The stars in the sky fell to the earth like unripe figs shaken loose from the tree in a strong wind. [14] Then the sky was divided like a torn scroll curling up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. [15] The kings of the earth, the nobles, the military officers, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid themselves in caves and among mountain crags. [16] They cried out to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, [17] because the great day of their wrath has come and who can withstand it?"

(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. (CCC 2817) This petition is "*Marana tha*," the cry of the Spirit and the Bride: "Come, Lord Jesus." Even if it had not been prescribed to pray for the coming of the kingdom, we would willingly have brought forth this speech, eager to embrace our hope. In indignation the souls of the martyrs under the altar cry out to the Lord: "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" For their retribution is ordained for the end of the world. Indeed as soon as possible, Lord, may your kingdom come! (Tertullian, *De orat.* 5: PL 1, 1159A; cf. Heb 4:11; Rev 6:9; 22:20).

## Revelation 7

### (Rev 7, 1-9a) Put the seal on the foreheads of the servants

[1] After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on land or sea or against any tree. [2] Then I saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud

voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, [3] "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." [4] I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the Israelites: [5] twelve thousand were marked from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, [6] twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh, [7] twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe of Issachar, [8] twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand were marked from the tribe of Benjamin. [9a] After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue.

(CCC 1296) Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal (Cf. Jn 6:27). Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4, 30). This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial (Cf. Rev 7:2-3; 9:4; Ezek 9:4-6). (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).

### **(Rev 7, 9b-12) Blessing, glory, wisdom be to our God**

[9b] They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. [10] They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." [11] All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, [12] and exclaimed: "Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

(CCC 957) *Communion with the saints*. "It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself" (LG 50; cf. Eph 4:1-6): We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we

also be their companions and fellow disciples! (*Martyrium Polycarpi*, 17: *Apostolic Fathers II/3*, 396).

**(Rev 7, 13-17) They survived the time of great distress**

[13] Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?" [14] I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows." He said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15] "For this reason they stand before God's throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. [16] They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. [17] For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(CCC 2473) *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110). (CCC 1173) When the Church keeps the memorials of martyrs and other saints during the annual cycle, she proclaims the Paschal mystery in those "who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposes them to the faithful as examples who draw all men to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she begs for God's favors" (SC 104; cf. SC 108, 111).