

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation *Overview*

November 19, 2024

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Scroll

- Chapter 5 continues John's report what he saw when he passed through the open door to heaven.
- Scroll: John sees the one seated on the throne holding a scroll with writing on both sides and is sealed (106).
 - Ezekiel 2:9: It was then I saw a hand stretched out to me; in it was a written scroll.
- Key: The writing on both sides of a prophetic scroll suggests the superabundant divine revelation it contains. The scroll contains God's plan for future judgment (107).

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Scroll

- Note: The two tablets of stone that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were written on both sides (Ex. 32:15).
- Key: The scroll represents God's covenant promises made with his people throughout history. It is God's plan of salvation for the entire world (McIlraith, 64).
- The sealed book refers to Sacred Scripture, for it was opened by no one except Christ, whose death, Resurrection, and Ascension opened access to all the mysteries it contained. None but the Lord could reveal the hidden meanings of the sacred word (Hahn & Mitch, 43).

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Scroll

- Seven Seals: Suggests the importance of the document. Only the addressee could open a sealed document. Here, a sealed document indicates that the scroll will remain unread until the authorized person will open it (107). In writing a will, the testator and six others would put their seal on it (Cavins).
- Mighty angel: We will also see a mighty angel with a scroll containing God's judgments in 10:1 and where Babylon's destruction is solemnly decreed with a powerful gesture in 18:21 (footnote, 107).
- No one: No created being in the whole universe, including the angels, is worthy to open the scroll or to examine it (literally, "look into it") (109).

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John's Weeping

- Many tears: John begins crying. John perceives that the scroll contains the message he is called to prophesy, a revelation that indicates what God will do to rescue his people and establish his kingdom (108).
- Whereas Daniel was told to keep God's revelation secret by sealing the book until the end of time (108), John learns that the scroll will be sealed until someone worthy can open it. Without the Lamb, history remains incomprehensible.
- Pope John Paul II: The Redeemer of Man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history (*Redemptor Hominis*, 1).

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John's Weeping

- John wept because salvation was available, but nobody was found who could introduce [the scroll] to history, make it a reality on earth (64).
- One of the elders: Probably one of the twenty-four elders seated around God's throne in 4:4.
- Interrupts John's weeping to let him know that the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is worthy to open the scroll (108).



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The Lion of Judah

- The elders provide two Messianic titles:
 - Lion of the Tribe of Judah: In Genesis 49:9-10, Jacob had blessed his sons before dying and called Judah a lion wherein the lion became the symbol of the Messiah (McIlraith, 64). Jacob describes Judah, the ancestor of King David, as "like a lion," a person from "the scepter shall never depart" (108). The Messiah comes from Judah.
 - Root of David: The second title is from Is. 11:10, where the Messiah appears as the "root" of David's father, Jesse (Hahn & Mitch, 43).

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The Lion of Judah

- Triumphed: Or “conquered” RSV *nikaō*, the same Greek word used for “victor” in chaps. 2 and 3 (108).
- Key: The lion of the tribe of Judah conquered through the love, i.e., through the sacrificial gift of himself.



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The Lamb

- John turns expecting to see a majestic animal, a lion, in all its glory. However, after turning, he sees that the lion is a Lamb!
- Standing: The Lamb is upright, fully alive, and ready for action.
- Mass: At Mass, we stand for the gospel, symbolizing our attentiveness and respect.



Key: The Lamb standing is a symbol of the Resurrection.

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The Lamb

- Seemed to have been slain: The Greek word for "slain" is used of a person killed by violence or of an animal slaughtered for secular or sacrificial purposes (109).

Lamb in Sacred Scripture	
Genesis 22:8	God provided Abraham a lamb for the burnt offering instead of Isaac.
Exodus 12:3 – 13	A Passover Lamb's blood protected the Israelites from the final plague as judgment fell on Egypt.
Isaiah 53:7 – 8	Isaiah describes a "Suffering Servant" who was like a "lamb led to the slaughter" or "slain" for his people.

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The Lamb

- In the New Testament, John the Baptist sees Jesus and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29).
- Peter writes to the Christians in Asia: “You were ransomed...with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).
- Key: Revelation uses the word “Lamb” to refer to Jesus more than any other title, exactly twenty-eight times – seven times four – to emphasis completeness (seven) and universal significance (four) (109).

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The Lamb

- The Lamb is standing in the midst:
 - Throne: In front of the throne as the Lamb receives the scroll from the hand of God in Rev. 5:7.
 - The four living creatures: Symbolize all of creation and the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
 - The twenty-four elders: All of God's covenant people – twelve tribes of Israel and twelve Apostles
- Key: The Lamb is the central focus of worship by all of creation and God's covenant people.

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The Lamb

- Seven horns: The Lamb has the fullness of power (omnipotent).
- Seven eyes: The Lamb has the fullness of knowledge (omniscience).
- Seven spirits: John links the Lamb with the fullness of the Spirit (or the Holy Spirit).
- Key: The Lamb has the fullness of divine knowledge, power, and the Holy Spirit.



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The Lamb

- Receiving the scroll: The Lamb is entrusted with implementing and revealing God's plan to save the human race and to establish God's rule over the cosmos (110).

Receiving Authority (Old Testament)

Daniel 7:13-14	One like a son of man coming on the clouds to God and receiving eternal kingship.
Psalms 110:1	The Messiah is invited to sit at God's right hand and rule until his enemies are defeated.

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Fresh Praise

- When the Lamb receives the scroll, a fresh round of worship follows this symbolic action indicating its great significance (110).
- Key: God is praised for his entire work of salvation that is accomplished through Christ (110).
- The four living creatures and twenty-four elders prostrate themselves before the Lamb. The Lamb now receives the kind of adoration that is appropriate only to God (110).

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Incense as Prayers

- Harps: In ancient Israel, the harp had ten or twelve strings and were used to celebrate various joyous occasions. The singing of psalms and hymns was common in Israel's temple worship (110).
- Gold bowls filled with incense: Incense was placed in a gold bowl alongside "the bread of the Presence" and was burned as a sacrifice on the golden altar of incense in the morning and the evening (Exod. 30:7-8) (111).
- The burning of incense signified the offering of acceptable worship to God ("a sweet smelling aroma") and came to symbolize prayer that God accepts (111).

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Incense as Prayers

- Prayer of the holy ones: In the New Testament, the holy ones (“saints”) refers primarily to the members of the Church made holy through faith and baptism, although it can also refer to God’s faithful who have died (111).
- The prayers of God’s faithful arise like sweet-smelling incense in the throne room of God, the center from which God’s plan unfolds (111).
- Key: The prayers of God’s people help shape the course of history (James 5:16-18) (111).

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Incense as Prayers

- In our Catholic liturgies, we use incense at our solemn liturgies as a sign of our prayers rising up to God.
- God instructed Moses to incense to purify and sanctify the tabernacle (Exod. 30:34-38).
- The priest incenses at the beginning of Mass, the Gospel, and the offertory.



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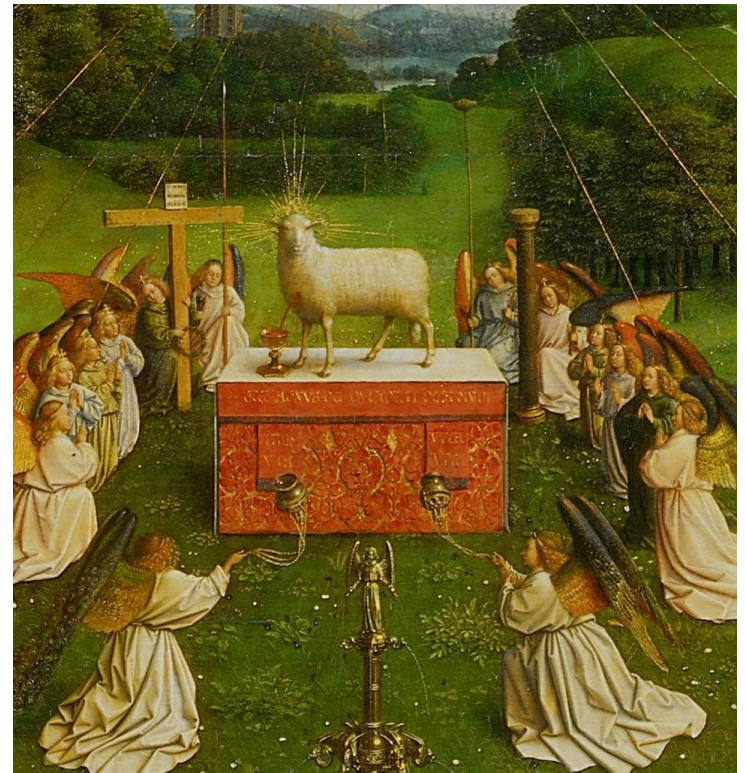
New Hymn

- New hymn: The twenty-four elders sing a new hymn in response to salvation that God will bring about at the climax of history through his servant (111).
- The hymn reveals why the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll, i.e., the Lamb was slain and his blood was poured out thereby purchasing (ransoming) human beings from every tribe and tongue, people and nation. In short, no ethnic group is left out (111).
- Key: The Lamb has ransomed human beings from sin (1:5b), Satan (12:9-11; 20:1-3, 10), and death (1:18; 21:4) (111).

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New Hymn

- Jesus offered himself to the Father in love (Eph. 5:2; Rev. 1:5), and God accepted his perfect self-gift (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:12-20) (111).
- As Peter says, “You were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb (1 Peter 1:18-19).



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New Hymn

- The Lamb's sacrificial death not only purchased human beings for God but also made them a kingdom and priests for our God.
- God's promise at Sinai was to make a covenant people, that they would be to him a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Exod. 19:6). The Lamb fulfills this promise made at Mt. Sinai.
- Key: At baptism, the child is plunged into Christ's death and Resurrection, adopted into God's covenant family, and shares in Christ's threefold office of priest, prophet, and king. In short, the child shares in Christ's royal authority!

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New Hymn

- The heavenly congregation sings a “new song.” The phrase “new song” may be associated with the hope for the New Exodus, in which Israel would be returned from the exile by the Messiah, who would restore the kingdom of David.
- In the first exodus, Moses sang a song as Israel passed onto the other side of Red Sea (Ex. 15:1-18).
- Here in Revelation, the elders stand next to the “sea” (Rev. 4:6) and sing the “new song” of the new Exodus (Barber, *Coming Soon*, 92).

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Angelic Praise

- **Voices of Angels:** The many angels form the third ring around the throne beyond the living creatures and elders.
- **Countless:** The Greek says, “myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands.” A “myriad,” is equal to ten thousand, was the highest number used in the Greco-Roman world (115).
- These glorious creatures praise the Lamb in a loud voice. In chapter 4, all of heaven praised God the Father in his work of creation. Here all of heaven adores the glorified Christ because of his work of redemption accomplished on the cross (115).

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Angelic Praise

- The Lamb is given seven honors in verse 12. Each honor is preceded in the Greek by a single article, a way of indicating that they are aspects of a single reality (115).

Honors Given to the Lamb	
Power	Honor
Riches	Glory
Wisdom	Blessing
Strength	

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Every Creature

- Like a rock hitting the water, the angelic praise ripples out to every creature in heaven and on earth and in the sea. The angels teach the saints to worship God in heaven.
- They praise both the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb.
- Forever and ever: The adoration of God and the Lamb is eternal.



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Victory Assured

- The universal praise of 5:13-14 thus anticipates the conclusion of the book and the end of history, the time when “at the name of Jesus / every knee shall bend, / of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10).
- According to the rest of Revelation, until that time comes human beings and superhuman entities will oppose the Lamb and his followers.
- The outcome, however, is never in doubt. The Lamb of God has truly conquered by his sacrificial death and resurrection (116).

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Angelic Praise

- The liturgy we celebrate on earth is a mysterious participation in the heavenly worship. In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims. Our worship in the Mass mirrors the heavenly liturgy (117).

The Earthly and Heavenly Liturgy

Holy, Holy, Holy	Incense to worship God
Presbyters (elders) who preside at worship, often wearing white robes	Use of musical instruments for singing and worshipping God
Bowing, kneeling, prostrating oneself (ordinations/consecrations)	Images and icons of Christ, the saints, and angels point to heaven

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Next Time

- In Revelation 6-7, we will learn what happens in the liturgy of heaven has earth-shaking consequences.
- Throughout the book, the events on earth are affected and even effected by the actions of Jesus with the angels and saints in the heavenly liturgy.
- Therefore, as Jesus opens the seven scrolls, things begin to unravel on earth (Barber, *Coming Soon*, 93).



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Next Time

- In other words, we will learn that what happens in the liturgy affects history. God's faithful will overcome by the blood of the Lamb.
- They will overcome not by power or might, but by the Spirit of the Lord.
- Key: History turns on worship, in what happens in the sacrifice of the Mass.



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Next Time

- Tuesday, December 3rd



Revelation 6

The first six seals

6:1 – 17

Revelation 7

The 144,000 sealed

7:1 – 8

Triumph of the elect

7:9 – 17