

24. August 2020

**“The Heavenly Jerusalem”
St. Bartholomew**

Rev 21,9-14

One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came to speak to me and said, 'Come here and I will show you the bride that the Lamb has married.' In the spirit, he carried me to the top of a very high mountain, and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God. It had all the glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond. Its wall was of a great height and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; on the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The "heavenly Jerusalem" awakens a similar longing in us as paradise. Man wants to live in harmony and peace, he longs for perfection. In the depths of the soul he longs for God, even if he perhaps does not see it that way for himself or would not call it in this way.

In John's visions, which are often not easy to bear, and which describe the plagues that are coming upon humanity and culminate in the fall of Babylon in chapter 18 of Revelation gives us comfort and hope with the image of the New Jerusalem, the "heavenly Jerusalem".

The end of human history is not destruction, but a life in God for all those who have accepted the love of God. This is what the Gospel says when Jesus speaks of the signs that precede his return: *“When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.”* (Lk 21,28)

The text from the Apocalypse wants to lead us to the reality of God, which prepares the way for people - even in the midst of darkness. So the apocalyptic plagues are like the birth pangs for that time in which God will “be all in all” (*cf. 1 Cor 15,28*), the Kingdom of God on earth as in heaven.

This reality, which will only fully manifest itself at the end of time, begins already in the Church, but is still overshadowed by the sins of the people. But the splendor of the tribes of Israel and the splendor of the twelve apostles shines through time until today.

Even if, unfortunately, we often perceive the dark sides of the Church, which are revealed in the sins and errors of the members of the Church, we must not lose sight of the beauty of the Church, of the holiness given to her by God, which is reflected in the saints of the Church.

One of these saints is the Apostle Bartholomew, identified with Nathanael and mentioned in the Gospel today. He, Nathanael, a true Israelite, in whom there is no deception (*cf. Jn 1,47*)! Jesus himself testifies to us. Here we already find the New Jerusalem descending from heaven. People in whom there is nothing wrong, who have recognized God and serve him, in whom the work of redemption is manifested and in whom it is carried on.

The New Jerusalem is already being formed in the apostles, as well as in all those who receive the grace of God in their lives and live in it. In the faithful members of the Church, the heavenly Church is already united with the earthly Church, and also with those who are purified after death, the suffering Church.

In those who follow the will of God, the kingdom of God breaks forth and the apostles participate in a special way in the Kingdom of Christ! *“Then Peter answered and said, ‘Look, we have left everything and followed you. What are we to have, then?’ Jesus said to them, ‘In truth I tell you, when everything is made new again and the Son of man is seated on his throne of glory, you yourselves will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.’” (Mt 19,27-28)*

Mankind is approaching this judgment; day by day we are getting closer to the Second Coming of the Lord, which will bring everything to completion. Before that is the hour of grace for all humanity, the hour in which the judgment of God is already offered.

God offers us eternal life in his Son. If we accept this grace, then eternal life already begins, a life - unlike our transitory earthly life - which will never end. We can already be conscious servants and members of the New Jerusalem on earth, in union with God, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles and all the angels and saints.

In this way, the New Jerusalem is already being built, whose King is God, who offers His reign in fatherly love to mankind.

"I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make his home among them; they will be his people, and he will be their God, God-with-them.'"
(Rev 21,2-3).