

Homily for Thursday November 17, 2016

Revelation 5

Today we continue to peer into the throne room of heaven as our gaze is even more focused on Jesus.

We begin with St. John seeing a scroll that is sealed with seven wax locks and the angels crying out:

“who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals”?

So the question is: what is the significance of this scroll? The answer is found in the description of the writing found on it.

written within and on the back,

In other words it has writing on both sides.

This brings to mind another document with writing on both sides, the Ten Commandments:

And Moses turned, and went down from the mountain with the two tables of the covenant in his hands, tables that were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. (Exodus 32.15)

The scroll that John sees is the culmination of these Old Testament writings – for the Revelation Scroll is represented the fullness of God’s Old Testament revealed word. Jesus alone is the one who can open its seals, for it is only in and through Jesus that the Old Testament can be fully interpreted.¹ Here we have something that points us directly to the Mass. In the liturgy is read repeatedly year after year, the fullness of God’s covenantal story interpreted through the life, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

So we can say that these opening verses of Revelation five are representative of the Liturgy of the Word.

From there we move immediately to the focal point of the Mass. For while John is told by one of the elders:

“Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

when he looks, he does not see a lion but a lamb.

¹ We will also see in Revelation six and eight that the scroll has a second meaning, the unfolding of history – which can ultimately only be understood in the light of Jesus.

Why then the reference to the Lion of the tribe of Judah?

Jesus' ability to "open the scroll," that is, to fulfill God's covenant promises, depends on His Davidic lineage, which is implied by the phrase, "the lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David." David was from the tribe of Judah. The covenants in the Old Testament reach their climax in God's covenant promise to David to establish an everlasting kingdom through his son

As Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant, He fulfills all God's promises in the Old Testament. One cannot, therefore, overlook the importance of the Davidic covenant for Jesus' mission clear.²

Then John writes:

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; 7 and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

John expects to see a Lion (5:5) but turns to see a wounded Lamb. This is the first of 28 times that Christ is depicted as a Lamb in Revelation.

It's important to notice that even in heaven—after the Resurrection—Jesus still appears "as though slain." He still bears the wounds in His body, just as He showed the apostles the nail marks on Easter Sunday. Standing before the throne of God as the Lamb who had been slain, He continues to re-present His offering to the Father for all time. He died "once and for all," but continues to present Himself as Priest and Victim in heaven.

Christ forever appears as a sacrificial victim, having taken the scars of his Crucifixion with him into heaven. Standing upright, his posture symbolizes his victorious rising from death to life. The seven horns and seven eyes represent the totality of power and knowledge possessed by Christ.

And it is here that we come to the focal point of every Mass. Jesus elevated in the consecrated Host and Precious Blood re-presents himself to us.

This is why just before the third elevation the emphasis is on the Lamb... There is the three-fold "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" followed immediately by the priest declaring:

² Barber, M. (2005). *Coming Soon: Unlocking the Book of Revelation and Applying Its Lessons Today* (p. 90). Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”

Do you see how the culmination of the Mass has us right here in Revelation chapter five?

All that will unfold in the rest of the Revelation is centred in the vision of the throne room of heaven and the Mass.

May we be inspired to discover ever more fully the richness of the Mass where the seals are opened, the Lamb of God adored, and consumed, so that we can sing through our earthly pilgrimage with the saints and angels of heaven:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!” (Revelation 5:12-13)