

The Heavenly Jerusalem (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24—The Heaven Jerusalem and the Eucharist

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them... ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24)

1. Mount Sinai: “what may be touched” (12:18; cf. Exod 19-20)
2. Mount Zion/Heavenly Jerusalem: “the city of the living God” (12:22)
3. Angelic Hosts: “innumerable angels” (12:22; cf. Dan 7:11-14)
4. Heavenly Church: the “assembly” (Greek *ekklēsia*) in “heaven” (12:23)
5. Saints: “spirits” of just men made “perfect” (Greek *teleios*) (12:23)
6. Jesus: “the mediator of a new covenant” (12:24)
7. Blood of New Covenant: “the sprinkled blood” (12:24)
8. Blood of Abel: “speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (12:24)

Living Tradition

Vatican II: *The Church, further, which is called “that Jerusalem which is above” and “our mother”* (Gal. 4:26; cf. Apoc. 12:17), is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb (Apoc. 19:7; 21:2 and 9; 22:17)... While on earth she journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6), the Church sees herself as an exile. *She seeks and is concerned about those things which are above*, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God until she appears in glory with her Spouse. (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* no. 6)

Eucharistic Prayer II:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

V. *Lift up your hearts.*

R. *We lift them up to the Lord.*

V. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

R. It is right and just.

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father most holy....

And so, *with the Angels and all the Saints*
we declare your glory,

as with one voice we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. (Roman Missal, 3rd ed.)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What is the vision of “the Church” in Hebrews 12? How are we able to participate in the Heavenly Jerusalem when we are still living down here on earth?

For Further Reading

1. Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey. *Hebrews*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*. Translated by F. R. Larcher, O.P. Lander, Wyo.: Aquinas Institute, 2012.
3. Mary Healy, *Hebrews*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic, 2016.