

**The Great Tribulation
(4th Sunday of Easter, Year C)**

Revelation 7:9, 13-17—The Vision of the Great Multitude

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, *a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...*

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” ¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “*These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” (Revelation 7:9-17)

1. **Innumerable**: “no man could number” (cf. Gen 15:5, “number the stars”)
2. **Multi-Ethnic**: from “every nation” (Greek *ethnous*)
3. **Multi-Lingual**: from all “peoples” and “tongues” (Greek *glōssōn*) (7:9)
4. **White Robes**: white vestments; symbolize purity (7:9; cf. Rev 3:4; Dan 12:10)
5. **Palm Branches**: used during feast of Tabernacles (7:9; cf. Lev 23:40; 2 Macc 10:6-7)
6. **Great Tribulation**: time of trial before the final resurrection (7:14; cf. Matt 24:21)

¹ “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. *And there shall be a time of tribulation, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book.* ² *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* ³ *And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.* ⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:1-2, 4)

The Living Tradition

Catechism: *Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers.* The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy

from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist... The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world. (CCC 675, 677)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (4th Sunday of Easter, Year C)

1. What does the Church teach about the "great tribulation"? What role will it play in the final Advent of Christ?

For Further Reading

1. Bede. *Commentary on Revelation*. Translated by Faith Wallis. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.
2. Peter S. Williamson. *Revelation*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015.