

**The Four Creatures of the Apocalypse
(3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C)**

Revelation 5:11-14—Worthy is the Lamb

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and *the living creatures* and the elders the voice of many angels, *numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands*, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*” ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “*To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!*” ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:11-14)

1. Angelic Hosts: “myriads of myriads” = innumerable angels (1:11; cf. Dan 7:10)
2. Living Creatures = four creatures from earlier vision:

And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are *four living creatures*, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a *lion*, the second living creature like an *ox*, the third living creature with the face of a *man*, and the fourth living creature like a *flying eagle*. (Rev 4:6-7)

⁵ And from the midst of it came the likeness of *four living creatures*. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men, ⁶ but each had *four faces*, and each of them had four wings... ¹⁰ As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a *man* in front; the four had the face of a *lion* on the right side, the four had the face of an *ox* on the left side, and the four had the face of an *eagle* at the back. (Ezekiel 1:5-6, 10)

3. The Lamb = Christ, the Passover lamb; crucified and risen:

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, *I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...* (Rev 5:6)

3. King of the Universe: “every creature” honors “the Lamb” (5:13)
4. Amen: Hebrew word for “So be it!” (5:14)
5. Liturgy: the “elders” fell down and “worshipped” (5:14)

The Living Tradition

Jerome: The first face of a *man* signifies *Matthew*, who began his narrative as though about a man: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ...” [Matt 1:1]. The second [face signifies] *Mark*, in whom the voice of a *lion* roaring in the wilderness is heard: “A voice of one shouting in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord...” [Mark 1:3]. The

third [is the face] of *the calf* which prefigures that the evangelist *Luke* began with Zachariah the priest. The fourth [face signifies] *John* the evangelist who, having taken up *eagle's wings* and hastening toward higher matters, discusses the Word of God. (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, Preface 1.3; trans. Thomas P. Scheck)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C)

1. What is the Old Testament foundation for John's vision of the "four living creatures"? What did these animals come to signify in Church tradition and art?

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.
3. St. Jerome. *Commentary on Matthew*. Translated by Thomas P. Scheck. Fathers of the Church 117. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.