

Opening the Word: The world's satisfaction

✘ Scriptural numbers have meaning. In the Book of Revelation, the city of Jerusalem is designated as a city saturated with the number 12.

There are 12 gates, 12 angels, 12 tribes, 12 courses of stones and apostles.

Why is the number used so often? The number 12 is an image of the perfection of time and space in the natural world and the Scriptures alike. There are 12 months in the year. Twelve is an important number, a symmetry consisting of four sets of threes that can mark the north, the south, the east and the west. There are 12 tribes and 12 apostles.

Even when the Book of Revelation clarifies that 144,000 will be sealed with the mark of the Lamb, it does not mean the number as emphasizing a limited program of salvation. Instead, 144 is 12 times 12. It is perfection multiplied by perfection, foretelling the possibility of a perfect number of elect.

Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 26, 2019

ACTS 15:1-2, 22-29

PS 67:2-3,5,6,8

REV 21:10-14, 22-23

JN 14:23-29

All those who should belong in the heavenly city will belong to the heavenly city. It will not only be a perfect city. It is the perfect city squared.

What makes this city perfect? It is a city governed, not according to an economy of scarcity, but the generosity of the Lamb once slain.

That's why there is no temple in the city. There is no

sanctified space set apart for the worship of God.

This is not because the heavenly Jerusalem is devoid of worship. One need only work one's way through the Book of Revelation to see how much of heaven is dedicated to adoration, to praise, to the glorification of God.

There is no temple in this city because the city itself has become the temple. Likewise, there is no sun or moon – no markers of day and night – because the sole vocation of the city is adoration of the Lamb once slain.

The heavenly Jerusalem is the original city that never sleeps. Its wakefulness is not because there is endless commerce in the streets, endless traffic and endless human beings crushing one another as they rush from place to place. The light that shines upon this city is the love of God that has transfigured the created order. The city in the book of Revelation bestows to us a vision of earth's original vocation. All creation, every human being, every stone was made for praise.

We can begin to see the contours of this city coming into existence here and now. Jesus, before he suffered on the cross, offering himself to the Father, promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples.

This Spirit, the Advocate, is the very breath of Jesus Christ. It is the spirit of divine love that now descends on the created order, bringing creation back to God.

We are baptized in the Spirit. We pray through the Spirit. We recognize Christ in the hungry and thirsty through the Spirit. We receive his Body and Blood through the transformation of the Spirit. We pray for the sick through the gift of the Spirit.

The Spirit, through the life of the Church, is active here and now.

The heavenly Jerusalem is what creation will eventually become. The earth is destined to be transfigured through the blood of the Lamb.

Even now, even here in this vale of tears, we can make out the promised perfection. The heavenly Jerusalem appears whenever men and women give themselves over to the Spirit of divine love that is the Church.

This work of the Church will not end until every person who should belong to the city does.

It is, after all, a perfect city.

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