

Revelation 7:9-17ⁱⁱ

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

ⁱⁱ About the First Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

Revelation, an example of apocalyptic literature, conveys mysteries—both earthly and heavenly—in a highly symbolic fashion. Verses 9-17 describe the second of two visions, telling of the assured victory of God and God's people. The ethnic diversity and innumerability of the "great multitude" (v. 9) indicates the universality of the redeemed. Their white robes are a sign of purity and righteousness, and they recall the white robe put on the newly baptized.

Those who have “come out of the great ordeal” (v. 14) include those who have suffered martyrdom and all who have endured faithfully. The destiny of the redeemed weaves together images from the Old Testament: service and shelter, satisfaction of hunger and thirst, the guidance of their shepherd and the end of all sorrow.