

22 May 2022—The Sixth Sunday of Easter: Revelation 21:10, 22 – 22:5

(God's) servants will worship Him; they will see His face, and His Name will be on their foreheads. The Revelation to John is one of my favorites. I know for many this is not the case: it is incomprehensible, confusing, psychedelic in imagery, at times seemingly inconsistent with the rest of the New Testament. Such observations are not unfounded. Yet, I like the wildness of it. It reminds me that, from my limited perspective, God is incomprehensible, confusing, psychedelic, and at times seemingly inconsistent. The great early 20th century spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill put it: A god we can understand is not worthy of our worship.

I could spend hours talking about the imagery in just this one passage, but since I don't enjoy Prayer Books being thrown at me, I will concentrate on one phrase: in the New Jerusalem God's servants *will worship Him; they will see His face, and His Name will be on their foreheads* (22:3-4). The promise in Jesus' beatitude in Matthew 5:8 will come true: *the pure in heart...will see God*. What does 'see God' mean? St. Augustine wrote, "God will be seen by the eyes of the heart, which can see realities that are immaterial." 'To see' includes 'to comprehend,' to 'experience firsthand.' To see God is being intimately with God, knowing God, being known by God, and rejoicing in God all at the same time.

We will see God in a specific way: God's servants *will see His face* (22:4). In antiquity the phrase 'to see the king's face' signified more than mere observation. The expression meant being granted an audience with the king, an opportunity to present one's petition in direct personal conversation (Genesis 43:3,5; Exodus 10:28-29, etc.). Thus, to see God's face signifies a relationship of trust and openness. This is confirmed by the next detail: *God's Name will be on their foreheads*. When the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies once a year, he wore a golden band around his head on which was written the unspeakable Name of God, centered on the High Priest's forehead. The High Priest's purpose in entering the Holy of Holies, the locus of God's presence on earth, was to intercede before God for all the people. In Jesus every servant of God has free, intimate access to God, to be an intercessor on behalf of. We enter God's presence as oblations, offering ourselves as intercessors for the world, for everyone. This harkens back to Revelation 1:6: We read Jesus has *made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father...*

In this our lives echo that of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14, etc); we do not merely follow him as passive observers, we become what He is. I John 3:2: *Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. And all who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.* Therefore, living a Christian life is a progression towards holiness—purity in thoughts, words, and actions—offered to God in adoration of His Being, in thanksgiving for His grace. And this holiness into which we are called to progress is put into action through our twin vocation of oblation and intercession. We progress on the path to holiness as we offer ourselves on behalf of, in and for the lives of others.

I urge you to practice your life of oblation/intercession in a very practical way. There is at least one person in your life who does not know the love of God in Jesus Christ. Always bring that person with you when you come to worship. Stand before God for her; pray in his place; give praise and thanks in her stead; receive God's grace on his behalf. We never come just for ourselves and our needs. *(We) will see His face, and His Name will be on (our) foreheads.* You and I are called to stand and kneel, sing and pray, worship and adore for the world that God loves and longs to redeem. May you live today, in the sure and certain expectation of seeing God face to face; may your life today be open and expansive, receiving all the super-abundant grace of our Lord and freely sharing God's grace. Jesus intercedes with the Father for us; we join him in interceding in His Name for the world.

Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.
high priest but once a year; God is now freely accessible. Amen.