

Readings: Acts 15: 1,2, 22 – 29; Psalm 66 (67); Apocalypse 21:10 – 14; John 14: 23 – 29.

Today's reading from the *Revelation to Saint John* misses out an important addition to what we heard last Sunday about the holy city, new Jerusalem, which was described as *beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband*. In the verse before our reading an angel says to the seer: "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." The Old Testament image of God's People as a Bride is being interpreted here in the same way as it is in the letter to the Ephesians. In chapter 5 (verses 25 – 27) we read that *Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her...that he might present the Church to himself in glory... holy and without blemish*. The Church is the Bride of Christ, who is *the Lamb*, and we are all members of Christ.

At every mass we are reminded of the words of an angel to John (19 verse 9) that *Blessed are those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb*, of which our communion is a foretaste.

Today's reading tells us three things about the heavenly Jerusalem, which is an image of the Church as Christ's Bride. First, the city is foursquare with twelve gates, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, which may be intended to show that the Church inherits Israel's task of bringing people from every nation to God. The image of a city with gates that are always open, and through which the treasures of the nations are brought in, takes up the language of Isaiah 60 – but without the idea of the submission of foreigners to the Jewish people. (*This idea is developed in the verses which follow today's reading*).

Secondly, the city has twelve foundation stones *each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*. The Church, therefore, is (as the letter to the Ephesians [2:20] says) *built upon the foundation of the apostles* – that is upon their witness to the resurrection of Christ.

Thirdly, in this new Jerusalem, unlike its earthly predecessor, *there was no temple...since the Lord God and the Lamb were themselves the temple*. In our world of time and space there is need of symbols and signs of God's presence, but in the new world which is revealed to John men and women have no such need, because, as we read last Sunday, *God will make his home among them...his name is God-with-them*, and his *radiant glory*, together with the *torch* which is the Lamb – the crucified and risen Christ, is all the light they need.