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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Letters of St. John, and Revelation

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THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1–4.** To what does this prologue to John’s letter give witness? On whose behalf is he speaking? How does John describe the Incarnation in terms applicable to the sacraments of the Church? What sacrament might serve as an example, and how?
2. **1:5.** What does it mean to “live in the light”? Who else in Judaism shared this black-and-white view of the world?
3. **1:9.** What kind of confession of sin does John envision? In biblical terms, what does “confession” mean? To what should private confession of sins to God ordinarily lead us? How does Jesus imply this in John’s Gospel? How do we know that confession of sin to a priest is not a peculiarity of the New Covenant?

For application

1. **1:1–4.** Has your reception of the sacraments, particularly Reconciliation and Eucharist, affected your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? In what way? What story (or, in John’s word, “testimony”) could you tell to illustrate the difference these sacraments make? How might such stories encourage others?
2. **1:5.** Refer to the note for this verse. How do you picture the world? To what extent would you share John’s black-and-white view of it? If you are willing to tolerate “shades of gray” in yourself, how would your approach to sanctity compare with that of John—or, for that matter, with that of Jesus, who said, “He who is not with me is against me” (Mt 12:30), and, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37)?
3. **1:6–7.** *For private reflection:* Think about which of the Ten Commandments touches the area of greatest moral weakness for you. What are the issues you face in regard to that commandment or to the Church’s teaching about it? Does your attitude or your behavior bring you closer to what John says in v. 6 or to what he says in v. 7?
4. **1:8–10.** How hard is it for you to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How might these words of 1 John encourage us to take advantage of this cleansing sacrament more often?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Expiation (2:2).** What can the Greek term mean in reference to God? Or to sin? Which of these two meanings is meant in 1 John? What is the basis for this understanding in the OT Greek? In light of this OT background, how does John interpret the death of Jesus?
2. **2:15–17.** Why does John urge readers to let go of the world, since God both made it and loves it? What is man’s natural inclination in regard to the world? Why do Jewish and Christian traditions promote the ascetical disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving?
3. **2:18.** If the “last hour” applies to the final phase of salvation history, what is this final

phase? Also, what does the expression “antichrist” mean? How is its meaning sometimes restricted?

4. **2:20.** What does it mean to say that believers are “anointed”? What is the relationship between confessing Jesus as Messiah and receiving his anointing? What kind of anointing did Isaiah have in mind (Is 61:1)? What does Vatican II teach about this?

For application

1. **2:1–3.** How scrupulous is your conscience? For example, how do you feel about committing small infractions, such as blurting out an obscenity? What comfort can you derive from knowing that “Jesus Christ the righteous . . . is the expiation for our sins”?
2. **2:4–6.** How do you respond spiritually when you violate one of the Ten Commandments (taking into consideration, as well, the way the *Catechism* understands their application)? How seriously do you take such violations? What motivation can you derive from knowing that obeying the commandments helps bring the love of God to perfection?
3. **2:15–17.** Reflect on the note for these verses. How difficult would it be for you to give up your economic, social, or political status or have it taken away? If its removal would be hard for you, how might this attachment be affecting your love for God?
4. **2:26–27.** Consult the note for v. 20, especially the part about what Vatican II teaches. Although the “supernatural insight into the gospel (*sensus fidei*)” protects the Church as a *whole* from error, individual Christians can (and do) err about what the gospel says. What aspects of the gospel are unclear to you? What can you do to understand better Christ’s teaching on these issues? How does the Church, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, provide guidance?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** How do believers become children of God? To what does the grace of divine generation entitle us? If our standing as sons and daughters before God is not in name only, what is it?
2. **3:6.** What is John saying that true believers refuse to do? To what does John’s focus on the moral life lead, and what point does he wish to make?
3. **3:16.** When it comes to laying down our lives, what two kinds of martyrdom does John have in mind? Who is called to which kind? How does John’s plea to help the needy with tangible assistance fit into this?
4. **3:19–20.** How does a believer know that his heart is beating with the truth? How does the heart respond? What is a sure sign of alienation from the truth? What does John mean by saying that God is greater than our conscience?

For application

1. **3:1–3.** According to these verses, on what should a desire for personal holiness be based? How does the basis of your own desire for holiness compare with John’s?
2. **3:4.** How does John define *sin*? Does John’s definition include both moral and civil law?

3. **3:9.** Meditate on this verse. What does it mean to say that, if “God’s seed abides” in you, you *cannot* sin? How might this consideration encourage you to avoid sin in the future?
4. **3:11–18.** According to John, loving your neighbor is essential for loving God. Do you ever get into a quarrel, especially one of a long-running nature? What have you done to resolve disagreements, grudges, or hurt feelings? If you cannot resolve them for some reason, how can you love those who have hurt you or whom you have hurt?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1** What must John’s readers distinguish? What practical test does John propose? Who are the false prophets about whom John is writing?
2. **4:8.** What does it mean to say that “God is love”? How does this divine love enter into history? How does John say that we can be sure God lives in us?
3. **Word Study: Confidence (4:17).** What else can the Greek word for “confidence” mean? How is it used with reference to speech? How does 1 John use the term?
4. **4:18.** How does love cast out fear? Over time, what does the exercise of charity instill?

For application

1. **4:1.** Consult the note for this verse. How would you test your own spiritual impulses, “senses”, or urgings? Against what standard? Have you ever concluded that a spiritual impulse, “sense”, or urge was not of the Holy Spirit? What brought you to that conclusion? What did you learn about discernment from it?
2. **4:4.** Compare this verse with 3:19–20. How might the recognition of the Holy Spirit’s presence in you help allay any anxieties you may have about the world or its influence on you? According to 3:21–24 and 4:13–16, how do you know that the Holy Spirit really is in you? Compare John’s criteria for recognizing the presence of the Spirit with those given in Gal 5:16–26.
3. **4:7–12.** According to v. 10 (and v. 19), where does our love for God and neighbor originate? What is the model of our love for one another? How is the love about which John is talking different from either liking or being attracted to someone?
4. **4:17–18.** How often do you think of the Day of Judgment, and what is your attitude toward it? When it comes to judgment, of what are you most afraid and why? Of what are you least afraid and why? How does love eliminate fear?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:6.** To what aspects of Jesus’ historical ministry does John’s expression “by water and blood” refer? What is John emphasizing?
2. **5:8.** How is evidence for the humanity of Christ shown to be continually present in the liturgy? That is, to what sacrament do the Spirit, the water, and the blood refer? Considering the Torah, explain why John would cite *three* witnesses.

3. **5:13.** By saying that his readers “have eternal life”, what is John saying about them? Of what are readers thus assured—and *not* assured?
4. **5:16–17.** What is the difference between sins that are mortal (deadly) and sins that are not mortal? To what mortal sin does 1 John most likely refer? What does Catholic moral theology teach about the way mortal and venial sins can be forgiven?

For application

1. **5:3–4.** In your experience, how does faith lighten the burden of God’s commandments? By contrast, how might lack of faith make the commandments more burdensome? What does “the world” have to do with the difficulty of following the commandments?
2. **5:14–15.** If we are children of God, why does he sometimes deny the requests we make of him? What does it mean, in practice, to pray “according to his [God’s] will”? Think of an actual situation when you prayed for a particular outcome and felt your request was not granted—how might you have changed the nature of your prayer to be more closely conformed to God’s will?
3. **5:16–17.** These verses are in the context of vv. 13–15. For what is John recommending that you pray—and why is that prayer according to the will of God? Consult the note for these verses: Why do you think John would not say that you should pray about mortal sin? If prayer alone cannot help someone who has fallen into grave sin, what can?
4. **5:19–21.** How can understanding the truth help you remain faithful to your Christian call in a world like ours? Granted that we no longer worship the idols familiar to John’s readers, what might be the idols in your own life? How might you avoid them?

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

For understanding

1. **v. 1.** To what can the Greek word “presbyter” refer? Which of these was John? Who is the “elect lady” being addressed in this verse? How does John envision this local congregation?
2. **v. 5.** How far back can John’s teaching about love be traced? How are the words of Christ’s supreme mandate explained, and what does it show about love?
3. **v. 9.** To what does the expression “one who goes ahead” refer? What does John mean by saying that someone “does not have God”? With what is his warning concerned?
4. **v. 10.** In apostolic times, for what were private homes used? How could hospitality in this kind of environment become harmful?

For application

1. **v. 2.** What—or rather, who—is the “truth which abides in us”? What practical difference does it make to regard the truth as a person (particularly, a Person of the Trinity) instead of as a thing?
2. **v. 6.** How can following the commandments be a service of love to the Christian community? By contrast, how can failure or refusal to follow the commandments be a disservice to the community?
3. **v. 8.** How can you protect yourself from being deceived by false, misleading, trendy,

or deceptive theological opinions? What efforts are you making to learn your faith at a level appropriate to your age?

4. **vv. 10–11.** Consult the note for v. 10. What do you think it means to “greet” a presenter of false teaching? How might extending an invitation to a dissenting theologian (for example, someone who advocates abortion) to speak in your parish involve you in his dissent?

THE THIRD LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

For understanding

1. **v. 1.** What was the relationship between John and Gaius? What do we know about Gaius?
2. **v. 7.** How were missionaries to be supported?
3. **vv. 9–10.** What do we learn about the character of Diotrephes from John’s sketch of him? Of what is his misuse of authority a symptom?

For application

1. **v. 4.** If you have children or others for whose education you are responsible, what efforts have you made to ensure that they follow the truth (that is, live active Christian lives)? How do you feel when you see that your efforts are succeeding?
2. **v. 5.** What opportunities exist within your own parish community for practicing hospitality to strangers? Have you taken advantage of those opportunities?
3. **vv. 7–8.** What is your relationship with Catholic missions or missionaries? In what ways do you support them, both financially and spiritually? If you do not provide at least some financial support for missionary outreaches, what keeps you from doing so?
4. **v. 12.** What kinds of evangelization (those specifically aimed at spreading the truth of the gospel, not simply social action) does your parish support or engage in? How can you evangelize in your daily life?

THE REVELATION TO SAINT JOHN (APOCALYPSE)

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Revelation (1:1).** What does the Greek word *apokalypsis* mean? As used in the Bible, to what does it always refer? How can mysteries be unveiled? Why is the title *Revelation* an apt one for this particular book?
2. **1:1.** How is the message of Revelation mediated? What does the note of immediacy in the book indicate about its fulfillment? What does the connection with the Book of Daniel imply for the meaning of Revelation?
3. **1:7.** How is the towering expectation of Christ’s coming in Revelation envisioned in the Book of Daniel? In the Book of Zechariah? How does John blend these two visions into one? What events, historical and eschatological, signal its fulfillment?
4. **1:12–17.** What does the inaugural vision of Revelation describe? How does this

depiction of Jesus recall the visions of Daniel and Ezekiel? What is John's response?

5. **1:12.** What are the seven golden lampstands? What do they symbolize? What image from Zechariah do the lampstands evoke, and of what is it a reminder for John?

For application

1. **1:3.** When Scripture is read aloud during the liturgy, do you hear it as just another spiritual reading or as the Word of God that you are called to apply to your life? What blessing might be yours if you follow the latter approach?
2. **1:7.** What practical effect does the promise of Jesus' return at the end of time (the Parousia) have on how you live your life? How near or remote is it to you? How does it affect your faith?
3. **1:10.** Read the note for this verse. Do you regularly set aside time for personal prayer? How much time do you usually devote to it and how often? If you take time for personal prayer, what effect does it have on your relationship with God? If you do not take time for personal prayer, how might you best begin to do so?
4. **1:16.** What does the image of a "sharp two-edged sword" coming from Jesus' mouth suggest to you? Why is the detail that the sword has two sharp edges important?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–3:22.** Where are the seven churches in relation to each other? How can we view John's letters to them in the five ways mentioned: traditionally, geographically, structurally, spiritually, and historically?
2. **2:6.** Who were the Nicolaitans? What is John's concern about them?
3. **2:7.** To what does the repeated expression "him who conquers" refer? What do the seven letters reveal? What does the "tree of life" signify? How is this promise a subtle one in connection with Ephesus? What is its significance in relation to Christ?
4. **2:9.** Why does John refer to members of a "synagogue of Satan"? What did the exemption of Jews from the worship of the emperors have to do with their relationship with Christians? What kind of crime was the Christian refusal to acknowledge the deity of Caesar?
5. **2:14.** To what does the "teaching of Balaam" refer here? What was the role of Balaam in Num 22–24? What does Christ's warning about the perpetrators of these sins have to do with Balaam's fate?

For application

1. **2:2–5.** According to these verses, why is orthodoxy in belief not enough? Since these verses are addressed to a local church (though individual Christians should take note), how can a community repent of a falling away from the love it once had? What might the consequences be of remaining orthodox but loveless?
2. **2:9–11.** How would you encourage a person or group whose current trials were obviously going to get worse before they got better? Have you been through similar situations? What do these verses ask of the Christian, and what hope do they offer?
3. **2:14–17.** How do you think the "teaching of Balaam" and the laxity of the Nicolaitans

apply to the present-day Church? How might a stronger devotion to the Eucharist help the situation? If a “new name” in Scripture means a new identity, how should that identity affect the life of the Church on earth?

4. **2:19–20.** How might an active, vibrant Christian community be susceptible to the influence of a charismatic figure who would lead it astray? What complaint does the Spirit have against such a community? According to v. 25, what should the community do?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:4.** By whom are white garments worn? What do they symbolize? Why will many in Sardis not be clothed in white garments?
2. **3:7.** Where was ancient Philadelphia, and what was the city like? What is the “key of David”, and what does it have to do with Jesus? What does Is 22:22 say about this key? What does the image of the key imply in this passage from Revelation?
3. **3:12.** What does it mean to be a “pillar in the temple”? With what does the stability of the pillar contrast? Why are the faithful marked with the name of God?
4. **3:16.** What is the connection between the temperature of Laodicea’s water and the fervor of its Christians?

For application

1. **3:1–2.** Visible enthusiasm or lack of it aside, what are some criteria for recognizing from its works when a community is spiritually dead? (Hint: Reflect on 1 Cor 13, Gal 5:13–25, or Jas 2.) How might a spiritually dead community return to life?
2. **3:2.** By contrast, how would one recognize a community, regardless of its size or wealth or organization, that is spiritually alive?
3. **3:10–11.** What are some of the advantages and some of the dangers in parish or community renewal programs? How can a parish or community “hold fast” to its spiritual heritage without becoming stodgy? How can it make changes without losing what it has?
4. **3:15–20.** What are some of the dangers of prosperity for individuals or groups? According to these verses, why is it *not* a disadvantage for a person or group to experience hard times? What does a person or group who is undergoing difficult times need to do about the situation, according to v. 20?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1–5:14.** How does the third phase of the Book of Revelation begin? What happens in these chapters? What is their dual focus? How does the liturgical setting in heaven allude to the cultic figures and fixtures of the Jerusalem Temple? What ancient belief do these and similar scenes express about the Temple?
2. **4:4.** Whom do the 24 elders represent? Upon what is the symbolism based?
3. **4:6.** What are the “four living creatures”? What do they symbolize? How does their appearance resemble the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel? How does tradition connect these creatures with the four evangelists?

4. **4:8.** What hymn are the creatures chanting? What is the threefold repetition of “holy” a Hebrew way of saying?

For application

1. **4:1.** Eastern Catholic Churches have as many as three doors leading into the sanctuary, and doors form an important part of the Eastern liturgy. What is the symbolism behind a closed door? An open door? Where does this door lead? Look again at 3:20: To what or to whom is the door to your heart open (or closed)?
2. **4:5.** Read the note for this verse. What is the symbolic connection between the Holy Spirit and fire? Why *fire* (as opposed simply to, say, *light*)? Do you have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit?
3. **4:8.** What is God’s holiness? What does his holiness do *to* you? In what ways are you aware of God’s holiness?
4. **4:10.** What things does a crown symbolize? Why would the 24 elders cast their crowns (with everything they symbolize) before God’s throne? What might that action suggest for your approach to God?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1.** What is the scroll? What does it look like? As seen in the subsequent context, what is the role of Christ?
2. **5:5.** What are the OT sources for the messianic titles for Jesus?
3. **5:6.** Though John expects to see a lion, what does he actually see? How many times does this designation for Christ appear in Revelation? How does Christ forever appear, and what does his posture symbolize? What do seven horns and seven eyes represent?
4. **5:9–10.** What does the worship of the Lamb indicate about him? What does the imagery of the song recall? What does it celebrate here?

For application

1. **5:6.** The image of the Lamb standing as though slain upon an altar is a common symbol of the eucharistic liturgy in religious art. How does it communicate the meaning of the Mass? What response does it evoke in you?
2. **5:9–10.** These verses allude to your participation in the kingly and priestly roles of Jesus. At the eucharistic liturgy, how does the priest’s role mirror that of Christ? How do we, as the lay faithful, participate in this priestly ministry?
3. **5:11.** If a *myriad* is Greek for the number 10,000, consider the number of angels and saints who join us in worship. What might the sheer quantity of fellow worshipers suggest for your participation in the Mass?
4. **5:12–14.** Of the four principal forms of prayer—adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and repentance—which do you see most often in the Mass? Which do you do most often when you pray privately? If God does not need our worship, why should we worship him?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1–8:5.** What does the breaking of the seven seals bring about? What do these seals parallel in Jesus' preaching? What does history tell us about their fulfillment? What relationship do the sevenfold disasters mentioned bear to the Torah? Although devastating, for what are these disasters merely a prelude? In Revelation, for what do they serve as the backdrop?
2. **6:1–8.** When are the four horsemen summoned, and what does each symbolize? From where in the Prophets does this vision come? What message does Revelation communicate by means of these images?
3. **6:9.** To what is the altar mentioned here a heavenly counterpart? Who are those slain for the word? Why do their pleas for justice come from beneath the altar? What is martyrdom thus portrayed as being?
4. **6:17.** Of what is the act of standing a sign? Who assumes this posture in Revelation? About what were Nahum and Malachi warning?

For application

1. **6:1–8.** Read the note for these verses. In what ways are *punishment* and *chastisement* both similar and different? Ideally, what is the purpose of each?
2. **6:9–11.** Why might our age be considered an age of martyrs? If the prospect of sacrificing your life for your faith were to become a reality, what would you do?
3. **6:12–14.** Has your own or your family's life ever been shaken by sudden turns of events? If so, what effects did this have on you, particularly in terms of your faith, your hope, and your love?
4. **6:16–17.** What is the *wrath* of God? If God is Love, as Christians believe, why does Scripture speak—even in the New Testament—of divine wrath?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:3.** What is the purpose of a seal? Who receives the seal in this vision? With what does the seal of God contrast within the broader context of Revelation? How does the entire scene parallel Ezek 9:1–7?
2. **7:5–8.** What two irregularities stand out in the enumeration of the 12 tribes? What may explain each irregularity? Whatever the precise reason for these irregularities, why was the number kept at 12?
3. **7:9.** Who are in the "great multitude" that John sees? Whom does the uncountable throng represent? For what were palm branches used? What is the OT background for this vision?
4. **Word Study: Shelter (7:15).** What does the Greek word for "to shelter" mean? What memory from the OT inspires its usage? From John's perspective, what function does the Tabernacle serve? How then does Revelation use the verb "to shelter"?

For application

1. **7:2–3.** When you make the sign of the Cross, what are you acknowledging? What is the significance of being sealed with this sign in Confirmation?
2. **7:4–8.** Read the note for v. 4. How many messianic Jews, Jewish Christians, or

Hebrew Catholics do you know? What contribution to Christian—especially Catholic—faith do Jewish/Hebrew Christians offer?

3. **7:9–12.** How much time per week do you spend in adoration of God (that is, without asking him for anything)? What can you learn from vv. 10 and 12 about how to offer prayers of adoration?
4. **7:14–17.** Which of the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) do these verses describe? What is the focal point of this virtue? How might you gain strength in your practice of this virtue?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1.** What kind of silence does the “silence in heaven” recall? Of what other kind of silence does Jewish tradition speak? What, then, is happening in the context of this background?
2. **8:3.** How do the priests on earth resemble angels in heaven? Who comprise the company of all the saints in heaven? What doctrine is the basis for their intercession?
3. **8:7–11:19.** How do the coming seven trumpet blasts compare with what happened with the preceding seven seals? The following seven bowls? On what scriptural events are the first four trumpet blasts modeled?
4. **8:11.** What is wormwood, and what does it symbolize? What is the connection here with the story in Ex 15:22–25?

For application

1. **8:1.** What is the value of silence for prayer? What is the difference between “dead” silence and a living silence? Which better characterizes your experience of prayer?
2. **8:3–4.** What characteristics make incense a good symbol for prayer? According to the note for v. 3, what kind of prayer is being offered here?
3. **8:6.** For what are trumpets used in the Bible? What kind of response do you think they are intended to evoke?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1–12.** What happens when the fifth trumpet sounds? What are the warrior locusts? What restrictions are placed on their activity? What do these limitations suggest? How does this plague compare with the vision of the prophet Joel?
2. **9:1.** Of what is the fallen star a traditional image? To what does the “bottomless pit” correspond? In the cosmology of Israel, who dwelt there? How does Christ control this realm?
3. **9:11.** What do the names Abaddon and Apollyon mean in their original languages? With what is Abaddon associated in the OT?
4. **9:13–21.** What force does the sixth trumpet unbind? How are these beasts different in their destructiveness from the locusts?

For application

1. **9:3–6.** What do locusts normally eat? According to John, whom are they supposed to attack? What would have protected them?
2. **9:7–11.** Although the locusts are ferocious in appearance and are led by “the Destroyer”, what damage are they allowed to do to the followers of the Lamb (see v. 4)? How is this similar to the authority Satan has over the followers of Jesus?
3. **9:15–19.** If “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23), how does this killing show divine justice? “Since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), what is the source of our hope that we might enter heaven?
4. **9:20–21.** Why do you think the scale of the killing in the previous verses only hardens the hearts of some people? Based on your experience, how common is this reaction?

Chapter 10*For understanding*

1. **10:1–11:14.** What is happening between the sixth and seventh trumpet? What does it set in motion? What does it mean for John?
2. **10:1–11.** What does the angel that John sees look like? What does the angel of the Lord do elsewhere in Scripture? How is the Book of Daniel pertinent? What do the similarities between Dan 10–12 and Rev 10 imply about the timetable of the prophecy?
3. **10:7.** What is happening to the “mystery of God”? Where in the OT is the link between the “mystery” and the messianic “kingdom” forged?
4. **10:9.** Why is John told to take and eat the scroll? Why does the message taste sweet but then turn sour? On what other Scripture passage is the scene modeled?

For application

1. **10:4.** If you had to describe to someone else, such as a spiritual director, what is happening in your spiritual life, how easy or hard would it be for you to do this? Why do you think many mystics have such difficulty discussing the content of their experiences?
2. **10:9** What is your own prophetic role as a baptized Christian? What is the balance between sweetness and suffering in your exercise of this role?
3. **10:10.** In order to exercise a prophetic role, what must you first do, according to the first half of this verse? How would you do that?
4. **10:11.** At whose initiative does the prophet perform his ministry? What is the role of vocation (or calling by the Lord) in what you do?

Chapter 11*For understanding*

1. **11:1.** Describe the prophetic action that John is asked to perform. What distinction is he told to make, and what is the significance of this? Explain how different interpreters offer different answers to the question: What did John measure? What is the OT background for this symbolic action?
2. **11:2.** Explain two different ways one might read this verse. What is the meaning of

the “forty-two months”? From where in the OT is this figure drawn?

3. **Word Study: Witnesses (11:3).** In what four ways is the word “witness” used in the NT and in Christian history? Which of these is the dominant sense in the Book of Revelation?
4. **11:8.** What is the “great city” to which John refers? What are its crimes? What is implied by its comparison to “Sodom” and “Egypt”?
5. **11:15–19.** What happens when the seventh trumpet sounds? What is the twofold biblical backdrop for this event?

For application

1. **11:1.** In colloquial language, what does it mean to “take the measure” of something or someone? By what standard would you take the measure of your spiritual life?
2. **11:3–12.** How would you measure the health of the churches throughout the world that have undergone persecution over the last 75 years or so? What are some examples? Why do you think such churches grow stronger rather than weaker?
3. **11:15.** What are some of the ways in which the expression “kingdom of God” can be understood? How can the existence of this kingdom be at once visible here and now and yet a mystery?
4. **11:19.** What considerations prompted many Church Fathers to link the Ark of the Covenant with Mary? How may the image of the Ark also be applied to the Church? To you yourself?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:1–6.** What three things does the woman of Rev 12 represent? What is the fourfold biblical background upon which John is drawing in his depiction of this scene?
2. **12:3.** What does the great red dragon represent? What do his horns and his diadems symbolize? For what did this draconic serpent stand in the ancient Near East? What is he called, and how is he pictured?
3. **12:5.** Who is the “male child” that is born? What image connects him with Ps 2? How is this psalm fulfilled in Christ, according to the NT?
4. **12:13–17.** What happens when the devil is slammed down to earth? What does this imagery recall from OT narratives?

For application

1. **12:1.** Read the note for vv. 1–6. Why is the appearance of the woman called a “great sign”? What makes her a sign of Mary? What makes her a sign of the Church?
2. **12:3.** Why is the appearance of the dragon also called a sign? A sign of what?
3. **12:6, 14.** These verses mention the flight of the woman into the wilderness. What is God able to do for his people in the wilderness that is not done anywhere else?
4. **12:17.** Some theologians and spiritual writers speak of “spiritual warfare”. What does the term mean to you? How might events in your life indicate that you are engaged in spiritual warfare? How is the Church at large engaged in it?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1–2.** In what ways does the beast from the sea mimic the Lamb and assume the posture of a rival? From what OT vision do the animal features of the beast come? What is different about the way the OT and Revelation use this imagery?
2. **13:3.** What do the seven heads of the beast represent? What are two ways of understanding the healing of the beast's mortal wound?
3. **13:17.** What choice does the beast force the world to make? What does the note suggest may be the historical background?
4. **13:18.** Of what is the number *six hundred and sixty-six* probably a cryptogram? Why is the reference to Nero as the beast entirely apt? Where else in the Bible does the number 666 appear, and what is its significance? In light of this, what does the note suggest Solomon may typify?

For application

1. **13:1–2.** Read the note for these verses. What do you think is the “beast” of our day? How does it mimic the role of religious faith?
2. **13:4.** What effects can you see of this “beast” in the world at large? Have you been affected by it? As the verse asks, how can you fight against it?
3. **13:11.** Read the note for this verse. Again, what might this beast be in our time? That is, what in our culture looks innocent but speaks an insidious language that draws its listeners to worship the beast you identified just now?
4. **13:16–17.** Whose “mark” did you receive when you were baptized? Whose sign do you make upon yourself when you pray? How can this mark or sign fight against the authority of the beasts you identified?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** What does Mount Zion represent here? Of what is the earthly Zion a visible model? In the OT, for what does Zion serve as the focal point? What is its connection with John's vision? What is the significance of the Lamb's name and the Father's name written on the foreheads of those gathered there?
2. **14:4.** What is the literal rendering of “they are chaste”? What two levels of meaning would this expression probably have?
3. **14:8.** Where was Babylon, and for what was it infamous? How does the way the angel speaks of the fall of this city resemble the OT oracles about the fall of Babylon?
4. **14:14–20.** How are the judgments of the righteous and the wicked described? How does the analogy describe what happens to members of both groups? Where else in Scripture do similar scenes of divine judgment appear?

For application

1. **14:4.** Why is chastity such a significant virtue for followers of Jesus? How important is this virtue for you, whether you are married or single?
2. **14:7.** Is God's judgment something for Christians to be afraid of or to hope for? How do you view the prospect that God will sooner or later judge you?

3. **14:13.** Why are the dead who die in the Lord blessed? What did judgment mean for them? Why is it appropriate to pray for their intercession?
4. **14:14–20.** Why is it appropriate that judgment should begin with the People of God? In the context of the note for these verses, what do the verses themselves indicate may be the outcome of that judgment?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:2–4.** What does John see and hear as a prelude to judgment? What song is being sung? What was the original song about, and how are the martyrs adapting it?
2. **15:6.** What is the significance of the bright linen? Why do the angels wear golden sashes?
3. **15:7** What are the golden bowls? What idea is reinforced by the use of these bowls to pour out plagues?
4. **15:8.** What is cutting off access to the throne room? What three OT events does it recall?

For application

1. **15:3a.** Why is *singing* an appropriate response to victory? How does singing sometimes enhance the experience of prayer?
2. **15:3b–4.** If God does not need our praise, why do we praise him? How are these verses a good model for a prayer of praise?
3. **15:6.** What is the main function of an angel? Why would these angels be dressed as Levitical priests? What do angelic and priestly functions have to do with your role as a baptized Christian in the world?
4. **15:8.** What does the term *glory* mean in ordinary usage? When applied to God? If entering into that glory is your final destiny, why should God hide it from you now?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1–21.** How is the emptying of the seven bowls of wrath unlike the cycle of the seven seals and the seven trumpets? On which of the Exodus plagues are five of the seven bowls modeled?
2. **16:12.** Where is the river Euphrates? What is its connection with earlier biblical history?
3. **16:16.** What does the word *Armageddon* mean? What was its historical location, and how was that location used? What is Revelation ultimately envisioning? What memories of victory and defeat does the plain of Megiddo evoke?
4. **16:21.** What does the final bowl bring upon the wicked Babylon?

For application

1. **16:1–21.** What spiritual response do you make to news of wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters, and economic privation all over the world? What spiritual responsibility do you have for them?
2. **16:5–7.** When is rejoicing at the overthrow of the wicked appropriate for a Christian?

How might such rejoicing be inappropriate?

3. **16:8–9.** If you are a parent, how do you encourage your children to repent through the punishments you administer? What do you do if the children refuse to repent?
4. **16:18.** Have you ever experienced an earthquake? Why is an earthquake so terrifying? On a spiritual level, what might an earthquake symbolize for you, and what effects might it have on your relationship with God?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **Topical Essay: Who Is Babylon?** How have interpreters identified the “Babylon” of Revelation? What are some of the arguments in favor of the two positions? Is it possible to hold that both are legitimate interpretations?
2. **17:1.** What does the recurring verb *seated* symbolize in this vision? It points to a relationship between what two historical entities? What is the symbolism of “many waters”? What is the connection with ancient Babylon?
3. **17:9.** The image of seven hills leads many to identify the harlot of Revelation with what ancient city? According to the note, how does an examination of the symbolism open the way for a different interpretation?
4. **17:10.** List some possible interpretations of the “seven kings”. Read literally, who are possible candidates for being the sixth king? Whom do ancient historians normally identify as Rome’s first king?

For application

1. **17:1–6.** Read the note for v. 1. How many meanings can you think of for the verb *to sit* (or, alternatively, *to seat*)? Why do you think John places such emphasis on the harlot’s being seated?
2. **17:9.** Read the note for this verse, considering again the harlot’s position. How does it indicate *alliance*? How does this image apply to the position many of us take with respect to the world?
3. **17:12–14.** Think of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century (e.g., Communist Russia, Nazi Germany, Idi Amin’s Uganda, and others). On what were they seated? How does the “one hour” of authority apply to them? With respect to the saints, what do they all have in common?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:1–24.** What is happening in these verses? What images in this chapter are taken from the judgment oracles of the Prophets?
2. **18:4.** In what two ways has the call to “come out of her” been interpreted? What NT passages are used to support these different readings? What plagues are being referred to in this verse?
3. **18:9–19.** Who are the representative clients of the harlot? Why are they saddened at her destruction? From where is this subsection of the chapter drawn?

For application

1. **18:4–5.** Because you live in the world and must have dealings with it, what are some of the dangers to faith as you engage in political and economic activities? For example, how seriously do you take the Church's admonition not to engage in unnecessary work—including commercial activity—on the Lord's day (see CCC 2185)?
2. **18:9–10.** According to the *Catechism* (CCC 1882, 2239, 2442), what involvement should Catholics have in the political process? What are some of the benefits and dangers of this involvement?
3. **18:11–17a.** Why have recent popes criticized the capitalist system for its outlook on world markets? What is the capitalist view of making a profit? How does this view square with the Christian perspective (see CCC 2426–42)?
4. **18:17b–19.** According to Catholic social teaching, to whom do the material goods of the world belong (see CCC 2402–6, 2437–49)? What is the responsibility of rich nations like ours for the welfare of poorer nations?

Chapter 19*For understanding*

1. **Word Study: Hallelujah (19:1, 3, 4, 6).** Of what is this word a transliteration? How many times does it appear in the NT? How is it used in the Psalms? What do some scholars maintain is the background of the repeated "Hallelujah" in Rev 19? To what does it build up? What does the word have to do with the celebration of the Christian Eucharist?
2. **19:7–9.** What are these verses describing? How does John envision the Church? How is she dressed? What does the marriage of the bridal city recall in Ezekiel?
3. **19:11–16.** How does Christ appear in these verses? What is his mission? What does the depiction of Christ dressed in a blood-covered robe and treading the winepress of wrath recall? What does the depiction of him as the Word swinging a sharp sword recall?
4. **19:17–21.** Describe what is going on in these verses. What kind of judgment is envisioned? According to the note, what historical happenings may be linked to the condemnation of the "beast" and the "false prophet"? From where does the vision of "the great supper" come?

For application

1. **19:5.** What role does praise of God play in your prayer life? Why is praise commanded here?
2. **19:11–13.** Why is Jesus depicted here as a fierce warrior rather than the Prince of Peace? In spite of the discomfort that many moderns have with military imagery, how might it be appropriate in Catholic spirituality?
3. **19:9.** Who *is* invited to the "marriage supper of the Lamb"? What is your role in ensuring that the invitation is accepted?
4. **19:15.** Why does a sharp sword come out of Christ's *mouth*? What does it symbolize? Why a sword?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1–6.** Explain the three main ways that theologians have interpreted the millennium of Rev 20. What has been the most widely held view, historically speaking? What does the note suggest as the OT background for the millennium? What is the Catholic Church's official position on this question?
2. **20:5.** What are two possible ways of understanding the first and second resurrection in Revelation? What are some other NT passages that lend support to these views?
3. **20:8.** Who are Gog and Magog? From where do these names come? What happens to them?
4. **20:11–15.** What is the Last Judgment? What happens during it? What is the outcome of that day?

For application

1. **20:1–6.** Read the note for these verses. Of the interpretations of the millennium surveyed, which do you think is most likely? Why do you think the Church rejects millenarianism?
2. **20:6.** Assuming the "first death" is physical death, what does the note for this verse say the term "second death" means? What does the *Catechism* say about it (CCC 1033–37)?
3. **20:10.** Why would a loving God create a place or state of eternal torment? Why does he allow people to go there?
4. **20:13.** On what basis are we judged? What part do motives play in how we are judged?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:1.** What does it mean to say there will be a "new heaven" and a "new earth"? In what way does this involve a process of regeneration? From where does this imagery come? What does it mean for the sea to cease to exist?
2. **21:2.** What is the new Jerusalem? Why does the new Jerusalem touch down to earth? To what city, described earlier in the book, is the heavenly Jerusalem the antithesis? What suggests this?
3. **21:9–22:5.** With what do these verses deal? From where do the details of this vision come, and what are they? Where else in Scripture are there visions of Jerusalem adorned in this way?
4. **21:16.** What shape does the eternal city have? What may have served as the model for this shape?

For application

1. **21:1.** Read the note for this verse. Based on what you already know about the symbolism of the earth and the sea in Revelation, what might John regard as a new heaven and a new earth? What, for example, does worship have to do with it?
2. **21:3–7.** How does God dwell with men already? What will be the difference between how he dwells with us now and how he will dwell with us in the way described in John's vision? How might you increase your desire to have God live with you?

3. **21:8.** With what kinds of people does God refuse to dwell? What is it about their behavior (especially habitual behavior) that God finds repugnant?
4. **21:22–25.** What is the source of light for the heavenly city? Since a baptized Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit, what should be the source of his light even in this life? How would you recognize it when you see it?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:1.** Of what is the “water of life” symbolic? To what does this imagery allude? How is the water an apocalyptic expression of a trinitarian mystery?
2. **22:2.** Other than in the present verse, where did the “tree of life” make an appearance in the Bible? What might its reappearance here be intended to convey?
3. **22:4.** What is the great hope of biblical spirituality? What does tradition call it? To what does it point?
4. **22:10.** What is John commanded not to do? Why is reading John’s message a top priority for his churches? How is this command in contrast to Dan 12:4?
5. **22:18–19.** What warning is given here? What similar warning did Moses give?

For application

1. **22:1–2.** Where does the river of life (the Holy Spirit) flow? To what does it give life? What purpose do the leaves of the tree of life serve? How does all this imagery apply to the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. **22:4.** What does “seeing the face” of someone mean? In this life, Scripture urges us to “seek the face” of God. How might you do that? What should the results of seeking God’s face be?
3. **22:13.** What does this verse suggest about the meaning of life? Regardless of your background, your career, your state in life, or your plans for the future, what does it all come to in the end?
4. **22:17.** A saying in the software industry goes, “If you have a good product, and nobody buys it, raise the price.” Is the Holy Spirit free or priceless? How much will possession of the Holy Spirit cost you?