

Session 6: Sealed and Countless

What We Found

Chapter 7 answers who can stand?: the sealed can stand. Before the winds blow, God's servants are marked on the forehead, a scene drawn from Ezekiel 9, where the marked are protected through judgment, not around it. For Catholics the seal is close to home: claimed at baptism, sealed at confirmation (CCC 1274, 1295–1296). The 144,000 has literary features that strongly support a portrait rather than a census: Judah first, Dan missing, Joseph's line doubled, twelve times twelve times a thousand. And then the book's pattern paid off: John hears a number and sees a multitude no man could number, from every nation, exactly as he once heard Lion and saw Lamb: God's people, counted and complete from his side, countless from ours (the Church leaves room here, and we said so honestly). They have come through the great tribulation with robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb: purity by his sacrifice, not our achievement. The Lamb is their Shepherd; God wipes away every tear. And the seventh seal opens onto about half an hour of silence in heaven, which we practiced together.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Bede the Venerable · *Explanation of the Apocalypse (summary)*

St. Bede teaches, in substance, that the 144,000 signifies the whole Church in her perfection: the people of the patriarchs and the apostles multiplied into fullness; many in the tradition, building on that arithmetic, read the countless multitude as the same Church seen from our side.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose · *On the Mysteries (as quoted in CCC 1303)*

St. Ambrose bids the newly initiated recall the spiritual seal they have received and guard it: God the Father has marked you, Christ the Lord has confirmed you, and has placed the pledge of the Spirit in your heart.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

The Church at Prayer · *The Liturgy of All Saints (November 1)*

Every year on All Saints the Church proclaims Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14 in her worship: the sealed servants of God and the countless white-robed multitude. She reads it not as a puzzle but, in this study's image, as her family album, and she venerates that countless multitude as her own.

Live It This Week

- Practice Revelation 8:1 once a day: two minutes of complete silence before God, phone elsewhere. No words; just stand before the throne sealed and known.
- If you have beloved dead, pray for them once this week in this chapter's words: that God shelter them with his presence and wipe away every tear.
- Memorize the memory verse.

Memory Verse

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:17, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Revelation 8:2–11:18.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 1138; 1274; 1295–1296; 1303–1305.