

DAY ONE

1. Record a thought from the reflection or commentary that was particularly meaningful to you.

NOTE: Chapter 16 contains the third series of seven visions that began first with the opening of the seven seals (6:1-7:17), followed by the second, the visions of the seven trumpets (8:1-9:19). This will be the last because the reader is told that God's wrath is coming to completion in them (15:1). *New Collegeville Commentary*

Read Revelation 15:1-4

2a. As Chapter 15 begins, John had a vision of another sign in heaven that was great and awe-inspiring. Whom did he see and what did they have according to verse 1?

NOTE: This is the third and final sign that John sees in heaven after the visions of the woman clothed with the sun (12:1) and of the huge red dragon (12:3). *Williamson*

b. What phrase from the end of that verse described the finality of what was coming?

3. According to the first sentence of verse 2, John saw "something like a sea of glass mingled with fire." This is reminiscent of his heavenly vision of the throne in Revelation 4:6. What does the fact that this image was now mingled with fire suggest to you?

4. Standing on the glass was a gathering of worshippers holding God's harps. How were they identified (second sentence of verse 2)?

5a. Once again, the heavenly host sang a joyful song of praise and worship to the Lord in verses 3-4. What phrase from their song is most meaningful to you and why?

b. What are your thoughts as to why the song was called the following in verse 3?

song of Moses, the servant of God

song of the Lamb

NOTE: Great composers have been inspired by these hymns to write new compositions throughout the centuries. The greatest of these was George Frideric Handel whose "Hallelujah Chorus," "Amen Chorus," and "Worthy is the Lamb" anthem are the most memorable and recognizable adaptations of hymnody in Revelation. *McBride*

6. **CONNECTION:** Today's readings end with a beautiful song played on a heavenly stage accompanied by God's harps. All throughout the Book of Revelation, there is a recurrence of joyful hymns of praise. Throughout this time of suffering and persecution, the Christian community would have been sustained by the songs of adoration and thanksgiving in this book. Our Christian community continues the tradition of music and song today. Share with your group how an appreciation of hymns and music are an important part of your prayer life. Can you give a recent example?

Record a verse of praise from your favorite song and let that lead you into prayer today.

DAY TWO

Read Revelation 15:5-8

7a. Today's lesson begins as John had another vision. Recall that he was standing in heaven (4:1), and that God's temple in heaven was opened before him and the ark of the covenant could be seen (11:19). What did he see according to verse 5?

NOTE: This term recalls the tabernacle or tent of meeting which was the original dwelling of God among the Israelites in the desert (Exodus 40:34-35). Like the ark of the covenant, the ancient tent was expected to be revealed at the time of the coming of the Messiah (2 Maccabees 2:4-8). *Niemann*

b. This was one of the names used for the tabernacle where the ark of the covenant was kept and the most holy place where God resided among his people. Compare this to the place in your church that you consider most sacred and give your reason for this.

8. When the temple opened, who came out, what were they carrying and how were they dressed (verse 6)?

9a. According to verse 7, what did the seven angels receive and from whom?

b. When have we read about bowls before? Compare their use here to Revelation 5:8.

NOTE: This description of divine judgment using the word "fury," attributes the human emotion of passionate anger to God thus helping readers grasp its severity. God's wrath differs from human anger in that it is motivated not by emotional reaction but by perfect justice and the radical incompatibility between God's holiness and evil of every kind. *Williamson*

10a. The temple became filled with smoke from God's glory and might. Record the result according to the end of verse 8.

b. In verse 8 we learn that no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues had been accomplished. We have encountered this problem before. In previous chapters of this book, "no one" was able to close the divinely opened door, open the scroll, count the great multitude or learn the new song (Revelation 3:8; 5:3; 7:9; 14:3). Comment on what the similar phrasing in these situations might mean.

11. In this chapter there have been references to the Book of Exodus. Select one and record why you think it might have been meaningful to the early Christians.

Song of Moses

tent of testimony, ark of the covenant

plagues

12. CONNECTION: Today in his vision, John saw the tent of testimony in the temple. This vision recalls one of the most holy and sacred images of his people from the story of the Exodus. This no doubt helped the early Christian community to remember the blessings that their ancestors received on that journey of faith when they learned to rely on God's mercy and goodness during their time of struggle. Do you have a healing memory of God's mercy, forgiveness or unexpected grace that has helped you grow or sustains you during times of stress? If you can, share your story with your group.

In Proverbs 10:7 it is stated that "the memory of the just serves as blessing." Write a prayer today thanking God for the memories that sustain you on your faith journey.

DAY THREE

Read Revelation 16:1-7

13a. As Chapter 16 begins, John heard a loud voice speaking from the temple to the seven angels telling them to, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's fury upon the earth." (verse 1). Look up and record one of the following verses that tells us about the fury or wrath of God.

Psalm 7:12

Nahum 1:3

Romans 1:18

b. Answer the questions that describe what happened after the first angel poured out his bowl upon the earth (verse 2).

What broke out because of the plague?

Who was affected?

Who was spared?

14a. The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea. What two things happened as a result (second sentence of verse 3)?

b. According to verse 4, the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water which also turned to blood. How do you think this punishment would affect the lives of those who have allied themselves with the beast?

15a. John then heard the angel in charge of the waters. Complete the following phrases to record what the angel said according to verses 5-6.

You are just

who are and who were

For they have shed the blood

and you have given them blood to drink

b. Recall that in Revelation 6:10 the holy martyrs asked how long they must wait until their deaths would be avenged. Have you ever prayed for a wrong to be avenged or asked God to give someone exactly what "they deserved?" What do you think of this kind of prayer?

16. In God's heavenly temple everything was alive. What did the altar cry out in verse 7?

17. Compare one of the plagues from this lesson with crises or problems that might arise in our world today:

First plague: festering and ugly sores

Second plague: sea turned to blood

Third plague: rivers and springs turned to blood

18. **CONNECTION:** Today we read that the angel in charge of the waters and the altar in the temple declared that God's judgments were just. As Christians we believe in the goodness and wisdom of God, and he is our guide in understanding the meaning of justice. God's wrath is not irrational, vengeful or unkind but occurs because of injustice, disobedience and evil in the world. Like a loving parent, he cannot let mistakes and misbehavior continue without being firm and providing just punishment. Have you ever had to discipline another in your role as a parent, supervisor or mentor? Was it helpful to use firmness, love and understanding? Share with your group how prayer and God's wisdom guided you.

Read and record Matthew 5:6. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Revelation 16:8-14

19. As we begin today, the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun. It was given the power to burn people with fire, and they were burned by the scorching heat (verses 8-9). What did they do and not do as a result of this according to the second part of verse 9?

20a. According to verse 10, what did the fifth angel do and what was the result?

b. How did the people react according to verse 11?

21a. While the first five angels and their bowls caused calamities that affected the whole natural world, the sixth angel and his bowl had a different effect. According to verse 12, he emptied his bowl on the great river Euphrates. What was the result according to the second sentence of that verse?

NOTE: The Euphrates was the ancient boundary separating East from West (Ezra 4:9-10; Nehemiah 2:9) and marking the eastern edge of the Roman Empire. Israel's worst destruction had come at the hands of kingdoms from the east, Assyria (721 BC) and Babylon (586 BC). In the first century, the lone threat to Roman security and military might came from the Parthians who resided across the Euphrates. These ancient enemies of God's people and the military threat to Rome are only symbols of something worse. Place names in Revelation are almost always important for what they symbolize. *Williamson*

b. What might be the consequences of the river drying up?

22a. In verse 13 John described three unclean spirits like frogs coming from three mouths. To whom did these belong?

b. Complete the phrases below that further describe the three unclean spirits from verse 14

These were demonic spirits

They went out

to assemble them for battle

23. Can you think of a modern example of something that resembles one of the plagues mentioned today from the list below? How would you react spiritually if that occurred in your life or in another part of the world?

Fourth, sun burning people with fire:

Fifth, plunging the world into darkness

Sixth, drying up the water of a major river

24. CONNECTION: Though the people suffered great hardship after three angels unleashed their plagues in our readings today, they still did not repent. They were so entrenched in their sinfulness that even when the power of God was revealed, they were unwilling to change. The same thing can be true in our lives. Daily, we are offered the gift of repentance and new life from God who never stops loving us and will help us make the changes in our lives that will bring us closer to him, our loved ones and our community. Our faith is a religion of new beginnings every day. Can you share a recent story of how you have been restored by your faith and God's love?

Read and record Mark 1:15. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

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DAY FIVE

Read Revelation 16:15-17

25. As we begin today, the pouring of the final bowl and God's judgment was delayed by a message from Jesus, "Behold, I am coming like a thief." Record the third of seven beatitudes in this book that followed this warning in verse 15.

NOTE: In some translations, this beatitude is inserted in parentheses.

26. Look up one of the following scripture verses that refers to the unexpectedness of Jesus' return. Record a word or phrase that reminds you of this thought.

Matthew 24:42

1 Thessalonians 5:2

2 Peter 3:10

27. In verse 16 the story resumes about the upcoming battle for which the demons were assembling kings (refer back to verse 14). Where did the demonic spirits assemble the kings?

NOTE: In Hebrew this name means "Mountain of Megiddo." Since Megiddo was the scene of many decisive battles in antiquity (Judges 5:19-20; 2 Kings 9:27; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24), the town became the symbol of the final disastrous rout of the forces of evil. *NABRE*

It is located in northern Palestine near the Mediterranean Sea, and today, is a scene of fruitful farms, fifteen miles wide and twenty miles long. It is also called the Plain of Esdraelon and is an impressive archeological site. *McBride*

28. This gathering place is one of the words and concepts from this book that has found its way into popular culture. Why do you think that is? Does it hold any meaning or previous associations for you?

29a. The last angel, the seventh, pours out the final bowl of wrath into the air. On what or whom do you think its contents would have fallen and what do you think that meant (first sentence of verse 17)?

b. When the seventh bowl is emptied, what did John hear, and how did that signal the moment of completion according to the second sentence of verse 17?

30. **CONNECTION:** Today, Jesus first offers a warning, "I am coming like a thief," and then a blessing to those who watch and are ready for his coming. We claim in every celebration of Mass as part of our faith in the Nicene Creed that Jesus Christ, "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." Also, the priest says a little prayer between the two parts of the Our Father, "...as we await in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." Share with your group your beliefs in the final days of judgment and some thoughts on how to grow in grace and holiness during your earthly journey.

Read 1 John 4:16-17 and record verse 17. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Revelation 16:18-21

31a. Today's readings begin with the fourth, final and most severe storm theophany in Revelation. (*Williamson*) Record the horrific natural disasters that befell the earth and its inhabitants from verse 18.

b. What was the worst storm, flood, or natural disaster you have ever experienced? What were your first thoughts? How did you react spiritually? Record a brief thought to share.

32. What was the result of the violent earthquake according to the first sentence of verse 19?

33a. In the second sentence of verse 19, we are told that "God remembered great Babylon." What special punishment was handed down to the great city?

NOTE: Babylon was a symbol for the corruption, idolatry and persecution of God's people and Babylon also symbolized Rome which prided itself on its greatness.

b. Why would cities be most affected by these catastrophic events?

34. What happened to the islands and mountains according to verse 20?

35a. Large hailstones like huge weights came down from the sky on the people (verse 21). How did they react according to the second part of that verse?

b. See the chart below that compares the seven visions of judgments. Briefly comment on any comparisons, patterns or end results.

SEALS Chapters 6-7 TRUMPETS Chapters 8-9,11 BOWLS Chapter 16

Conquest	Hail, Fire, Blood	Sores
Bloodshed	Mountain of Fire Sea into Blood	Bloody Sea
Famine	Wormwood Bitter Water	Bloody Water
Death	Sun, Moon, Stars Fall Darkness	Burning heat
Martyrs	Locusts	Darkness
Earthquake, Cosmic Destruction	Army Fire-breathing Horses	Invasion
Silence	Glory	Thunder, Hail, Earthquake

36. CONNECTION: In this passage we read that every island fled and mountains disappeared as the seventh bowl was poured out into the air. Islands and mountains, often places of refreshment and leisure that reflect the beauty of God's creation, would be destroyed in John's vision in today's readings. This reminds us to appreciate the beauty of our surroundings, to live in the moment and be grateful for what we have. Recall enjoying or being refreshed while spending time on an island, mountain or in a special place in God's creation. Share a story with your group about what filled you up or how your time spent in God's paradise restored your soul.

The Psalmist tells us, "In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul." (Psalm 23:2-3) Let thoughts of your own peaceful retreat lead you into prayer.

Read pages 67-72 in the *New Collegeville Commentary, The Book of Revelation* by Catherine A. Cory, Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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