

Why I Am Catholic

Proper understanding of Book of Revelation.

Over the centuries, the Book of Revelation is the most misunderstood and misinterpreted book in the Bible. Many people have claimed the world was ending and it didn't. Others claimed certain people were "the Anti Christ," and while they are viewed as "bad people," we cannot say they were "the Anti Christ."

In 2000, some thought all the computers were going to crash and the world was going to end. In 1000 A.D., they had similar fears; a heresy based on a new millennium causing big problems.

The first mistake usually is a misunderstanding of apocalyptic literature and the use of symbols and symbolic numbers. The Book of Revelation was written during a time of persecution as encouragement to hold fast to the faith. The author used coded language and spiritual images familiar to the Christian community. It sounds dramatic because those were critical times. The Church and the faith were being put to the test.

Apocalyptic language makes it seem like the end is near. The intent is to stress the urgency of a situation. The hope is that people will respond in faith, persevere in prayer, and resist the temptation to despair. The concern is that people have become spiritually lazy or distracted and they need to wake up." We are facing serious challenges. We likely will be called to die for the faith. Remember though, Jesus is with us." The Roman Emperor Domitian (666 in numbering) expanded the persecutions of Christians and was seen as the worst Roman Emperor yet. This was after Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome (64 A.D.). Domitian (81-96) perceived Christianity as a growing threat that must be stopped.

The author, using the name John (possibly a member of St. John the Apostle's community), is in exile on the island of Patmos. He writes down for us visions received during prayer or spiritual dreams. For him they are one message: "Jesus wins." The book is one revelation (singular).

The book cautions against listening to false prophets, calls believers to vigilance and resistance of spiritual and earthly enemies, and reminds us throughout of Jesus' victory. Jesus "is the Lamb that was slain." (Rev 5:10) The number four represents the world, six-imperfection, seven-perfection, and 12-the apostles and the Church .

"Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 675) This will occur "in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God." (675)"The Kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil." (677) We do not know when this will occur. The Bible reminds us that "we do not know the day nor the hour," (Mt 25:13) and that "not even the Son (of God) knows." (Mk 13:32)

We pray and with God's grace we live good and holy lives in anticipation of Jesus' return.