

04aa07-Letter-to-Ephesus

by "Sister Anne" | Jun 1, 2017 | 04aa Mary Unveils the Apocalypse | 0 comments



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Good evening everyone!

Greetings to our audio and YouTube listeners!

Last week, after concluding our reflections on the *central* and *fourth* column of the Seven Signs, we had just enough time to introduce Smyrna, one of the Seven Churches which forms the *first* column of the seven-sevens motif of the Book of Revelation. Of all her apparitions and locutions, Mary has only made one comment that I am aware of regarding the seven Churches. She identified the angels of the Churches, as not literally the angelic spirits who guard us, but the human beings who have spiritual responsibility for the Churches.

MMP #390 To the Angels of the Churches

Madrid, Spain

September 29, 1988

390a-“Beloved sons, . . . you have come from every part of Spain. . .

390d-This country of yours . . . is penetrated with a secularism which has particularly stricken the life of many priests and many religious. It has been lacerated by a deep interior division. It has been stricken in its pastors who, for fear of exposing themselves to criticisms, are remaining silent and are no longer defending the flock which Christ has entrusted to them.

390e-To you, who are the angels of the Churches, I address today the sorrowful reproach of my motherly Heart, for your lack of faith, of zeal, of prayer and of holiness. The Lord is about to ask you for an account of how you have managed his vineyard and why you have permitted rapacious wolves to enter into it, disguised as lambs, in order to devour a downtrodden and dispersed flock.

390g-Entrust yourselves to the protection of your guardian angels . . .

390h-And in the end you will all be able to form part of the victorious army, guided by your heavenly Leader, the Woman clothed with the sun . . .

To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons

Mary complains of priests, religious and pastors in one paragraph, then in the next paragraph She says that those who “are the angels of the Churches” will soon have to render an account. So, the term “angels” could include many others besides the chief shepherds of the flocks. Our Lady is right to say that all these persons will have to render an account, but the ultimate responsibility in any given region rests with the bishop because he has authority to encourage or to restrict the various personnel who minister in his diocese. This seems to be the implication in Scripture because the

letter is addressed to one person, one angel, not a committee: “To the angel of the Church . . . write.” Mary did not identify the Church of Spain as one of the seven Churches mentioned in the Book of the Apocalypse, so we have to assume that She thinks we have enough information from other sources to figure out the respective identities of the seven Churches.

From everything else that She has said, and that we know about our time, the Book of Revelation is *apocalyptic* in size. It’s all about a global struggle. We also know that Mary has identified the “rapacious wolves . . . disguised as lambs” as ecclesiastical Masonry, Catholic clergy, who adhere to Masonic values. In her apparitions Mary shows concern for the spread of atheism, communism and other evils such as abortion and exploitation of the poor, but She expects the Catholic Church to counteract these problems. Why not hold all Christians accountable, and Jews as well because they profess Biblical values? The Catholic Church bears the chief blame because it’s a world-wide entity, a Mystical Body. Jewish congregations have had no central authority since A.D. 70. Without the temple, they are unable to observe a large portion of the rituals prescribed in the Bible, so the congregations are not agreed about what portions of the Law remain an obligation. Protestants congregations, by nature, are likewise disconnected, independent entities without a central authority. They frequently morph into different confessions of Faith. Each member is obliged to interpret the Bible according to his own conscience, so membership in a Church is virtually incidental because they protest the very idea of rendering an obedience of faith to any mediating authority between themselves and Christ.

Despite all the sincere efforts of dialog and fraternity between Catholics and Protestants, in authoritative Catholic documents Protestant congregations are still never referred to as Churches but as “ecclesial communions” or “communities.” The Orthodox Christians, who retain the apostolic succession in their priesthood, are referred to as “separated Churches.” They render obedience to their patriarchs, but the patriarchs are separated from the supreme pastor, the successor of Peter, so they are unable to form one single Christian body [cf *Unitatis Redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism, 1964, #3]. This has been Catholic dogma for a long time:

Only those are *really* to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized *and* profess the true faith *and* who have not unhappily withdrawn from Body-unity or for grave faults [e.g., abortion] have been excluded by legitimate authority [excommunicated]. . . It follows that those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in one body such as this, and cannot be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.

Encyclical: Mystici Corporis (Pius XII, June 29, 1943) #22. See also Encyclical: Mortalium-animos, (Pius XI, Jan. 6, 1928, #10-11)

I’m not harping on this to any way disparage Protestants, among whom many are my dear friends, but I make the point because Mary has been explaining the meaning of the Apocalypse to a Catholic priest, and in her various apparitions holding the Catholic Church ultimately accountable for the global scale of sin in the world—therefore—to be consistent with that interpretation, we have to take the Catholic understanding of “Churches” when it’s used in the plural in the Book of Revelation. Elsewhere scripture refers to Churches in the plural only once. Mysteriously, Saint Paul is addressing the Roman Church, and evidently refers to the entire body of Christians as one faith community:

Greet one another with a holy kiss. **All the Churches** of Christ greet you!

Rom 16:16

Hence the texts in the catechism:

The phrase “particular Church,” which is first of all the diocese (or eparchy), refers to a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession. These particular Churches “are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997 #833

Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome “which presides in charity.”

By the way, I'll just throw in, as an aside, a testimony of a woman I met only yesterday. She happened to tell me that when her teenagers want to know what the Church believes, they bypass their parents to consult the catechism themselves. The text is so straightforward that thirteen and fourteen-year-olds use it as a handbook for all sorts of questions, such as the morality of shooting wildlife for sport. The 1997 catechism often quotes the 1564 catechism:

I acknowledge the holy, catholic, and apostolic Roman Church as the mother and teacher of Churches.

Creed of the Council of Trent (1564)

With the perspective that the seven letters in the Book of Revelation are addressed to Catholic pastors and religious who have been lawfully entrusted with the care of particular Churches, it becomes our task to determine the identity of these dioceses or regional communities. On the one hand, there is every evidence that active Christian communities did in fact exist in the seven cities named in the Apocalypse in the first century when the book was composed. On the other hand, there is stronger evidence that the book was more of a prophecy of a global ordeal that Christians would face in the future. We're going to take both hands.

We are going to assume that the number seven, the biblical covenantal symbol of completion, refers to all the Churches in the world that make up the Roman Catholic Church. Then we are going to mine the information that we know about each of those seven ancient cities, to help us identify Church communities belonging to seven modern regions or continents. This is nothing new. Today, most of the dioceses in the world belong to a regional "bishops' conference" where the leaders meet regularly to determine how to appropriately interact with the current events in their secular milieu and to study other questions. They share information and ideas, and they often share publishing costs for liturgical and other publications.

Let's look at John's initial vision

A Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him, that he might disclose to his servants what must speedily befall. And he signified it by a message of his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to whatever things he saw. . . John to the seven Churches which are in Asia: grace and peace from him who is and who was and who comes . . . I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying: What you behold, write in a book, and send to the seven Churches, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

And I turned to see what voice it was that spoke to me; and having turned, I beheld seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like to a son of man . . . And when I beheld him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not! I am the first and the last, and he who lives; I died, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and hell. Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are to befall after these, the mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven Churches

Rev 2:1-11

So, the entire Book of the Apocalypse is, primarily, a revelation for the seven Churches. Then within that great vision, there is a sub-vision, as it were, which reveals to each of the Churches some particular message. But even those messages contain things "which *are [now]*" and "things which are to befall *after* these." Here we are given permission, by the Scripture itself, to make the hypothesis that the seven letters contained messages for seven original ancient Churches, and "after these," things of interest for seven *modern* Churches—and all of these, ancient and current, belong to the one, same apostolic Church.

The Order of the Seven Letters

Are the seven Churches listed randomly, or by population, or by some other criteria? William Ramsay tells us that ancient historians are in agreement that these seven ancient cities "stood on a great circular road that bound together the most populous, wealthy, and influential part of the province." The carrier of the letter or scroll would start from

Ephesus, go north to Smyrna and on to Pergamum, then east to Thyatira, south to Sardis, southeast to Philadelphia and Laodicea. The distance between each station was approximately thirty-five miles. [cf Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, p. 183 (b.1851-d.1939)]

If the route was circular, the postman could begin at any point. But Saint John, or rather Christ, lists Ephesus as the first of the Churches. We only began with Smyrna last week because of the time slot, but last week we didn't proceed to identify Smyrna with any modern Church, because this longer introduction was required. Besides looking at the attributes of the ancient cities, we also have the Apocalypse itself to consult. The first Church should somehow correspond to the first seal, the first trumpet, the first sign, the first plague, etc. The second Church should correspond to the second seal, the second trumpet, and so on. Without proving the theory now, I'm going to go ahead and identify the seven Churches, all at once. Then we will discuss each Church in depth, beginning with Ephesus.

First Church: Ephesus

The Bishop of Rome with the Cardinals and the Curia

Second Church: Smyrna

Bishops of Poor Churches—Africa South America

Third Church: Pergamum

Bishops of Communist Dominated Churches—Russia, China

Fourth Church: Thyatira

Bishops of Multi-cultural Churches—India, Asia

Fifth Church: Sardis

Bishops of Wealthy Churches—North America

Sixth Church: Philadelphia

Marginalized Bishops, a term much-used by the Blessed Mother

Part of the 144,000 selected from every tribe and nation, from all the Churches

Seventh Church: Laodicea

Bishops of Tepid Churches—Europe

Let's read the first letter than comment on it line by line:

To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: thus says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps. I know your works, and your labor and your patience, and that you cannot bear evil ones, and have tested those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and found them false. And you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have against you that you have left your first love. Remember therefore whence you has fallen, and repent and do the former works. But if not, I will come to you, and will move your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. However, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches! To him that conquers, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Rev 2:1-7

Lampstands

Jesus identifies Himself as a person who has authority over the lampstands. This is the first hint that Ephesus refers to the Vatican, the Bishop of Rome with the Cardinals and the Curia who exercise an office of authority over all the stars (the leaders of the Churches) and all the lampstands (that is, the Churches). The temptation for me right now is to talk for an hour about lampstands. The seven-branched menorah is very rich in meaning in the Law of Moses, and rabbinical tradition, and it had a special place, not only in the temple, but in the liturgy of the sacrifices offered in the temple. But the Law of Moses only prescribed one lampstand for the Temple in Israel. Here at the end of Bible, we see seven lampstands. Some artists mistakenly Jesus' walking among seven little lamps, as if these form one menorah. No, the text

indicates seven lampstands, each with seven lamps, 49 lamps plus Jesus the “Light of the World.” There we are again with the Year of Jubilee, which is the 50th year and the end of seven sabbatical years.

We have to keep moving. We find the star imagery is revealed in another Marian apparition. I just gave a conference a couple weeks ago on Pontmain. The children saw a Woman in the heavens. It is night. The woman is framed by four candles. At one point a star from the sky seems to detach itself and it glides to each candle and with its flame, lights each candle.

The Temple menorah was fashioned as a stylized almond tree with the base and center shaft representing the trunk and with three “branches” on each side. The top of the shaft and of each branch was to be made like an open almond flower; each flower held the oil [cf Ex 25:32,37]. Moses only explains how it’s to be made. The Rabbis interpret the lamp as a symbol of Israel, whose mission is to become a “light to the nations” [Isa 42:7]. Yahweh called Israel a priestly people united by their High Priest so the Rabbis are surely correct to see the menorah as represented all Israel. When some challenged Aaron’s priesthood, God caused Aaron’s rod to bud and grow ripe almonds overnight; this miracle reaffirmed that the privilege of being chosen as High Priest only came through God’s appointment [cf Num 16:3;17:10].

In some parts of the Old Testament, angels are called watchers [Dn 4:17, 4:23]. Bishops are given a staff and charged with the duty of beating off wolves and watching over their flocks. Pastors and religious also share the duty of being watchers. In Israel the almond tree was nicknamed “the watching tree” because it always bloomed first, as if it watched all winter for the spring. Its lovely white blossoms make the tree look brightened by little flames.

The word of Yahweh came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?” “I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied. Yahweh said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

Jer 1:11-12

Albert Edersheim, the Jewish convert who wrote about the temple liturgy in the time of Christ, said that the lamp on top of the central lamp was called “the western”, because it was tipped westward to illumine the Most Holy Place, that is the part of the sanctuary behind the veil where the presence of Yahweh rested upon the Ark-seat. The other lamps sat upon “branches” but this lamp sat upon a shaft. Many are of the opinion that this central lamp was larger than the others to hold more oil because it burned night and day, while the others were only lit during the night. It helps us to think like Jews when reading the New Testament, not only to better visualize the symbols of the Apocalypse, but to let our minds associate symbols with customs and worship.

John saw the Savior ‘in the midst of the lampstands . . . clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across his chest with a golden sash.’ [Rev 1:12-13]. Edersheim tells us that both the girdle or sash of the ordinary priest, and that of the ephod which the high-priest wore, were girded there, and not round the loins [cf Ezk 44:18]. He also notes that the expression ‘golden girdle’ might bear reference to the liturgy itself, because the vestments of the high-priest were normally referred to as his ‘golden vestments,’ but on the Day of Atonement he wore ‘linen vestments.’ It was a priestly duty to light the lamps, trim the wicks and replace the oil.

It’s one thing to imagine the seven lampstands symbolizing all the Churches, and seven branches symbolizing all of Israel, but why did the modern Churches each need seven branches? There were three symbolic parts of the lampstand. The tree with branches and blossoms symbolized the laity rooted in the land, made holy by their presence. The flames or stars symbolized the leaders who light up the world with the truth that they preach and teach. Then there is the oil, rather hidden in the cup of the olive which fuels the whole enterprise. The oil is the lubricator and connecting point between the priestly stars and the tree of the laity. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the religious are those who have been consecrated to serve the Church with their particular gifts which the New Testament calls “charisms.” Nearly all religious in the Catholic Church are attached to one of the seven major rules: Saint Elijah (via Saint Albert of Jerusalem for the Carmelites), Saint Basil, Saint Augustine, Saint Benedict, Saint Francis, Saint Ignatius, and lastly the Bl. Virgin Mary (via Melanie at LaSalette). Sometimes the oil is hidden deep inside the almond cup but the prayer from the cloisters keeps a steady supply of grace flowing to the whole Church. Sometimes the oil is visible, but its purpose is to be burnt up in loving service to the laity and to the pastors. If a diocese lacks religious, it has to be manually operated like pushing a car that has no fuel in its tank. Every task is more difficult, like a widowed husband who must care for his children by himself. The household doesn’t run smoothly.

It was important to explore, albeit briefly, the rich symbolism of the lampstand because it’s very important throughout the Apocalypse and we’ll run into it again as we proceed. But more immediately, it occurs not only at the beginning of the Letter to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, but also at the end: “I will come to you, and will move your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.”

We just said that the lampstand was an almond tree. Can you move a tree? The Temple lampstand was made to be carried about in the desert and set down wherever the Tent was erected. It had two long poles attached to its base. It

weighed a talent (about 70 pounds) so four Levites took turns marching with it. Mature almond trees will get two stories tall. To physically uproot a tree that large will often kill it. What is the Lord saying to the angel of the Church of Ephesus? First of all, whatever he says to this Church applies to all the Churches because this is the head Church. If the pope, the cardinals, the bishops and or pastors, fail “to do the former works,” their “first love,” the priestly tree of the laity will move away from these unfaithful leaders. They will seek out pastors who are zealous and faithful, and take their tithes to these good pastors and worship in holy communities.

This opens a can of worms. Can the bishop of Rome fail? Can the Catholic faithful move away from the Pope? Don't we have a guarantee that the successor of Peter will never fail by falling into false doctrine? Did Peter fail? What did Jesus say?

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren

Lk 22:32

Even though Jesus prayed for him, Peter fell anyway. Surely Jesus and Mary were also praying for Judas, but he also fell. How many parents pray that their children won't fall away from the faith, but they leave the Church anyway? Prayer is like throwing a rope or a lifeboat to someone who is in danger of drowning. It sends the person extra graces. The Christian religion doesn't force anyone to grab on to the means of salvation. But, once someone has rejected all these graces, after they sink and panic, they can still cry out. At that moment the graces won by prayer spring into action, even when all seemed at the point of being lost Peter repented, and the new Peter was a humbled man. He would now work hard for the Lord and for his brothers. But He still wasn't perfect. Saint Paul had to issue a strong public correction when Peter was starting to compromise on doctrine. Popes are human beings. But Christ is praying that their faith may not fail.

Does the doctrine of papal infallibility guarantee that the Pope won't lead the Church into error? Dr. Warren Carroll [d. 2011] was a world-class historian who married a Catholic. He decided to do some research on this thing called the Catholic Church. He ended up writing a series of volumes, documenting the events that the Church encountered over the centuries as it carried on with saints and sinners. In his enthusiasm we founded a Catholic university which he named Christendom. I've read most of his books. I can't remember which one but there was a pope in the Middle Ages who became convinced that one point of doctrine needed to be changed. He was working on a decree which he planned to sign and promulgate the next morning. He died in his bed during the night. God protected the Church. Will God always kill off a Pope before he falls into error? That's new territory. We haven't been there.

In the Middle Ages only a small portion of the population was educated. The common people depended on the nobility and the clergy to guide them on complex matters. This is not the case today. The average Catholic in many dioceses of the United States can boast of a religious education far beyond any country priest in our pioneer days. Society is highly complex. Few people can make a living off the land. Almost all employment requires a significant level of literacy, and many jobs require college degrees even doctorates. I can't speak with authority about other countries but the world is a global village. People in every country use cellphones which requires more than a little literacy. Trade is ordinarily handled through the internet. This is not the Church of the Middle Ages. That Church was a child. Today's Church is all grown up.

I just listened to a podcast of a Catholic professor exploring the possibility of the Pope falling into an error. Heresy is the Greek word for error. I'll attach the link because I believe it was a very articulate assessment. His opinion was that the moment a prelate falls into error, he is a heretic. He is no longer a member of the Catholic Church. He no longer has any authority. He is not to be obeyed. His light has gone out. The lampstand needs to move away and find a lawful pastor to keep it lit. Jesus will evidently assist the lampstand: “I will come to you, and will move your lampstand out of its place.” We don't have to panic. Jesus is the High Priest He will guard his flock, but we have to be willing to be spiritually uprooted. If we are weighed down with sins of our own, it's not likely that we can evaluate sins in our leaders who are leading us astray. And if we are proud Pharisees who enjoy pointing fingers and accusing other people, we will hear the Lord's warning:

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven

Mt 5:20

Five of these letters to the Churches make an unpleasant read. Jesus is not happy with most of the Churches. The Apocalypse is about a sad time in the life of the Church. I think many people just stop reading the Book of Revelation

about right here in chapter 2 and never finish all 22 chapters. It's depressing to read about it. How much more depressing to live through it! This is why it is so comforting for the Mother of Jesus to visit us often with her numerous apparitions. She keeps up our spirits. She cheers us on. She reads to us from the whole book so that we can hear the victory cries of Hallelujah and the good times that will come after these times of trial. Just as Eve was tempted by the serpent in the Garden, now the Mystical Bride of Christ is being tempted by the big red dragon serpent in the sky. The Church is all grown up. She has reached the age of love. Will She eat the apple and bring down the whole earth? or will She call on the New Adam to come and save her? How will it end? Whatever the Church does is seen by the world. Jesus wanted us to bear a good witness:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Mt 5:14-16

The city of Ephesus was a very important metropolis. Ephesus was celebrated by Cicero with the epithet: "*lumen totius Græciæ*" "Light for all Greece." It's always amazing to me how interested the news is in the Catholic Pope. When's the last time you read a report on the travels of a Lutheran leader, or a chief rabbi, or a sufi? Can you even remember their names? But the Vatican officials make mainstream news all the time because evidently their atheist, agnostic, Protestant, or unchurched readers are interested. Why is that? I don't know. I guess, they like to watch the "watchmen." What I do know is that it is a great responsibility to let one's light go out because it will scandalize many.

Woe to the world for temptations to sin! It is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!

Mt 18:7

There is one more curious thing about lampstands that I want to mention. Albert Edersheim described the Temple liturgy in great detail as it went on in the days when Jesus walked the earth. He was explaining how the priests inside the Temple endeavored to trim the lamps exactly at the same time as the lamb was being sacrificed during the morning service.

One set of priests were busy in the court. . . offering the sacrifice . . . As the blood of the lamb was being sprinkled on the altar of burnt-offering [outdoors], the second priest ascended the three steps [indoors] which led up to the lampstand. He trimmed and refilled the lamps. Only five, however, of the lamps were then trimmed; the other two were reserved to a later period of the service. [Later on, after . . . the prayers in the court] had ended, he who had formerly trimmed the lampstand, once more entered the Holy Place, to kindle the two lamps that had been left unlit; and then, in company with the incensing priest, took his stand on the top of the steps which led down to the Court of the Priests. . . . The priests, who were ranged on the steps to the Holy Place, now lifted their hands . . . One of their number, probably the incensing priest, repeated in an audible voice, followed by the others, the blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: "Yahweh bless thee, and keep thee: Yahweh make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Yahweh lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

I've searched many books but I haven't discovered why two lamps were separated from the other five, and these two lamps were connected with the blessing liturgy. The Temple was still standing when Saint John wrote the Apocalypse so there may be many things that didn't need an explanation for the early Christians. But isn't it curious that Jesus chastises five of the lamp-Churches, but two of them he blesses?

Let's return to the Letter:

To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: thus says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps. I know your works, and your labor and your patience, and that you cannot bear evil ones, and have tested those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and found them false. And you have perseverance and have endured for my name's sake, and have not grown weary

Rev 2:1-7

It's the duty of this first Church, to test the other Churches. Jesus praises the papal curia for guarding true doctrine, calling out evil ones, persevering in this unpleasant task, enduring, laboring patiently, not growing weary, year after

year, even century after century. A steady stream of careful documents has issued from the Vatican hill, defining, clarifying, arguing, codifying, so that everyone who calls himself Catholic knows what it means to be a member of the Church. It's been a legacy of transparency of doctrine, interpreting and expounding the Scriptures so that Catholics can feel confident of the way Jesus would want his teaching applied amid new circumstances and new possibilities, like in vitro fertilization. Jesus is well pleased with this. It carries on the work of the Apostles:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world

and:

If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work

and:

For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? . . . So, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder . . . Tend the flock of God that is your charge . . . being examples to the flock

1Jn 4:1; 2Jn 1:10-11; 1Pt 4:17-5:2

Saint Peter was crucified in Rome probably on 13 October A.D. 64 during the festivities on the occasion of the “*dies imperii*” of Emperor Nero. This took place three months after the disastrous fire that destroyed Rome for which the emperor (Nero) wished to blame the Christians. Saint Paul is believed to have been beheaded soon after the fire July A.D. 64 or at least by the end of Nero's reign, in A.D. 68.

Saint James the Less, one of the three Apostles who walked with Jesus and was the pillar of the Church of Jerusalem, was martyred at the beginning of the siege about A.D. 67.

The last of the “three acknowledged pillars” was John. The Italian born Linus succeeded Saint Peter as Pope, taking charge of the brethren in Rome on the western end of the empire, while John's status as Apostle and his closeness to the Mother of Jesus gave him great authority as he watched over the Churches on the eastern end of the empire. There are numerous ancient testimonies that directly or indirectly indicate that John was established in Ephesus for many years. The seven city-Churches in the Apocalypse were located within a fifty-mile radius of his “archdiocese.”

An investigation of early Christian literature results in almost universal affirmation of John's sojourn in Ephesus. Tertullian (ca. 150-230) indicated that John came to Asia early. And Hippolytus Portuensis (ca. 160-235) recalled that John died there. A letter of the second century from Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, to Pope Saint Victor (189-199) mentioned that John was buried at Ephesus. Saint Irenaeus (b. ca. 150), a disciple of the Papia who was a pupil of Saint John, stated that John wrote his Gospel while living at Ephesus, and he added, as verified and reported by Eusebius (ca. 263-339), that it was a matter of apostolic tradition that John presided as bishop over the Church of Ephesus to the time of Emperor Trajan (98-117). Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215) noted that John returned to Ephesus after his exile on Patmos. His pupil Origen (ca. 185-253) maintained that John was in charge of Asia, that he lived there a very long time, and that he died at Ephesus.

Our Lady of Ephesus by Bernard F. Deutsch, Bruce Publishing Co., 1965

When did John arrive in Ephesus?

Paul was in Jerusalem in A.D. 49 and Acts says that John was in Jerusalem at that time. Paul stopped at Ephesus for a ship stop about the year A.D. 50 and only preached one sabbath. He returned five years later, finding only a dozen followers of John the Baptist. They had not heard of the Holy Spirit, so obviously John had not instructed them. Ephesus is a trading center and the men may have picked up a little Christianity in their trade or travels.

Luke, writing in his Acts of the Apostles describes Paul's short visit at the end of his second missionary journey [18:19-21], his extended visit at the start of his third missionary journey [19:1-40] and his farewell address in Miletus to the elders of the Church in Ephesus [20:17-38]. Before Paul's extended visit to Ephesus, he had sent Aquila and Priscilla from Corinth ahead of him to help the growing Christian community in Ephesus. Paul refers to Ephesus in 1 Corinthians

15:32 and 16:8-9 and in 1Timothy [1:3] and 2Timothy [1:18 and 4:12]. Paul spent at least two years and perhaps up to three years in Ephesus, some of it in prison. From Ephesus scholars think that Paul wrote his letters to the Galatians, Philippians, Philemon and his first letter to the Corinthians.

Since Paul made it his policy never to build on other foundations [Rom 15:20] it leaves no doubt that he was the first to evangelize this city: "A door has been opened to me" Paul rejoiced as he writes from Ephesus to Corinth [1Cor 16:9] because Ephesus, with its quarter million population, was the gate to Asia minor and Paul's converts would promptly evangelize the cities on its inland trade route—precisely the seven cities. Paul left Ephesus about A.D. 58 and went to Jerusalem that year.

So, no apostle had evangelized the city proper before A.D. 55, by which year Mary would have been 65-70 years of age, and tradition affirms that she did not live much longer than that.

What about the countryside? There is much reason to believe that John and Mary were lived for awhile not far from the city in a small community of Christians who were in hiding. John and other Christians were obliged to flee Jerusalem circa A.D. 41-44

About that time Herod [Agrippa] the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the Church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword

Ac 11:1-2

Imagine John's concern for the Mother of Jesus, entrusted to his care on Calvary! Ephesus is 700 miles from Jerusalem. It's a great trade city. Crowds of people travel there by sea all the time. They could get lost in the crowd. But in the city proper there was danger. They could be recognized. John and Mary were well-known. Any Jewish businessman traveling to Ephesus might recognize them and spread the word.

Tradition is strong that John built Mary a house of stone about a three hour walk (approx. 12 miles) away from Ephesus, on rough and difficult terrain. There is no tradition that Mary ever lived within the city, either in documents or in visionaries like Ven. Anne Catherine Emmerich.

Paul wanted to evangelize this area earlier but he was delayed.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia

Ac 16:6

When he finally arrived in Ephesus the Jews opposed him forcefully "and spoke evil of the Way." Not only was it a major shrine of Artemis, but a homestead of anti-Christian Jews. Could we infer that "the door has been opened" to Paul [1Cor 16:9] after the Mother of God had been present awhile doing battle in prayer and fasting against the spirit of deception and magic and evil spirits that went with the great goddess Artemis—Diana?

Modern interest in the ruins of this great city received a great boost in 1863 when a British architect, John T. Wood, set out to find the great temple of Diana. . . . Eventually Wood found a magnificent gateway with three arches, together with a road that was 13 yards wide, paved with marble. Marble was used in more than one road and those roads are still breathtaking. Many years later (1904-5) English archaeologist D.J. Hogarth took up where Wood had left off. He dug through to the foundations of the temple, including the altar. The altar was over 20 feet square. It is believed that the statue of Artemis stood behind the altar. Over 4,000 objects were recovered, cast in bronze, ivory, glass, crystal, wood, iron and terra cotta. In addition, about 1,000 golden and gold-alloy objects were recovered, together with ear-rings, brooches, necklaces and coins. There were also silver and bronze statues of Diana. Recovered coins also depict this goddess with several rows of breasts—though some scholars argue that they are clusters of dates, ostrich eggs, bee eggs, or some other symbol of fertility.

"The ABC of Biblical Archeology: Archaeology, the Bible and Christ, a survey presented by Dr. Clifford Wilson" (1995)

Did Paul instill a reverence for Mary among the new converts, as he must have been informed that She was residing not far away? Did Luke visit her in Ephesus and learn the infancy account? Consider Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Its theme is Church and Bride, and Paul was writing the letter from prison in Rome about A.D. 62-3, perhaps aware that John was the presiding bishop. This letter is unusually heavy in theology and lacks the personal style of Paul's other letters. It seems to be written as a circular letter. Consider that Ephesus was the great city of Artemis–Diana, the “Virgin” huntress, the moon goddess, the sister of Apollo (the Greek and Roman god of sunlight and prophecy). Her title was “Queen of the Wild Beasts.” A patroness of childbirth and fertility, although a virgin! A very ancient cult. The first temple was built in the 6th c. B.C., rebuilt in massive proportions in the 4th c. B.C., one of the seven wonders of the world. This temple of this virgin goddess was four times the size of the Parthenon.

Imagine Saint John contrasting Mary's virtues with Artemis! Mary's divine motherhood, was solemnly confessed and proclaimed in Ephesus at the Ecumenical Council of 431. This city was chosen for the great Council of Ephesus because of its deep-rooted, long-standing devotion to Mary. In the basilica called “Mary Church,” a large gathering of bishops solemnly proclaimed that Mary was truly Theotokos, the Virgin Mother of God in contradiction to the teaching of the priest, Arius. According to the canon law of that period, Churches could be dedicated to the saints in those places *only* where they had lived or died or were buried. In the fourth century Ephesus already possessed two *old* basilicas, one to Mary and one to John, so this attests that these two persons, who had been joined together by Jesus as “mother and son” at the foot of the cross on Calvary, had lived, or died, or were buried in Ephesus or its vicinity.

So this city has deep connections to the first Age of Arius, in which a heresy caused a massive rupture in all Christendom. Since 1960 we've been hearing about a new Age of Arius, Aquarius: water or flood of this old heresy which did not ascribe full divinity to Jesus Christ. And the city has deep connections to the Woman was prophesied in Genesis chapter 3 and whom Mary identifies as herself in Revelation chapter 12. This woman is the First Sign, and Ephesus is the First Church, and John was the First son of Mary.

Only in very recent times have we been able to identify the house that John built for Mary. With the invasion of Islam in the sixth century, Christians were driven out of present-day Turkey and many of our religious and historical sites fell into obscurity. All that remained to Christians regarding the latter days of Mary was the contradictory testimony of the archaeological remains of the large Church that had been erected and dedicated to Mary within the city of Ephesus—which could only occur according to law, as has been stated, if the saint had lived or died there—and Luke's account of the large Jewish population in the same city who were openly hostile to Christians and carried much weight with the Roman authorities. The city was not a safe seclusion for Christians. For centuries there was no way to reconcile these contradictory facts until a poorly educated, nearly illiterate German nun had a series of visions. Her life bore so many marks of authenticity that she was recently beatified. We will quote a few descriptions that were made by Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich in 1821 and 1822:

After our Lord's Ascension Mary lived for three years on Mount Sion, for three years in Bethany, and for nine years in Ephesus, where Saint John had taken her. . . . John had a house built for the Blessed Virgin before he brought her here. Several Christian families and holy women had already settled here, some in caves in the earth or in rocks, fitted out with light woodwork to make dwellings, and some in fragile huts or tents. They had come here to escape violent persecution. Their dwellings were like hermits' cells, for they used as their refuges what nature offered them. As a rule, they lived at a quarter of an hour's distance from each other. The whole settlement was like a scattered village.

Life of Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich

Bl. Anne Catherine later clarifies that Mary did not live in the city, but nearby. She sees it in vision:

Mary did not live in Ephesus itself, but in the country near it where several women who were her close friends had settled. Mary's dwelling was on a hill to the left of the road from Jerusalem some three and a half hours [walking distance] from Ephesus. This hill slopes steeply towards Ephesus; . . . Great avenues lead up to the city, and the ground under the trees is covered with yellow fruit. Narrow paths lead southwards to a hill near the top of which is an uneven plateau, some half-hour's journey in circumference, overgrown, like the hill itself, with wild trees and bushes. It was on this plateau that the Jewish settlers had made their home. It is a very lonely place, but has many fertile and pleasant slopes as well as rock-caves, clean and dry and surrounded by patches of sand. It is wild but not desolate, and scattered about it are a number of trees, pyramid-shaped, with big shady branches below and smooth trunks.

The little house stood near a wood. It was very quiet and solitary. The dwellings of the other families were all scattered about at some distance. The whole settlement was like a village of peasants. The Blessed Virgin lived here alone, with a younger woman, her maidservant, who fetched what little food they needed. They lived very quietly and in profound peace. There was no man in the house, but sometimes they were visited by an Apostle or disciple on his travels. There was one man whom I saw more often than others going in and out of the house; I always took him to be John.

Life of Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich

The *beata* provided an abundance of details regarding the location, but the political situation made it difficult to enter the country. Some decades after her death certain persons succeeded in reaching Ephesus, and using the accounts of the visionary as a map, discovered an area which fit the description to its minutest details. The walls of the house were gone but the stone foundations were there. News spread and it quickly became a modest Marian shrine attracting modern popes. So many local Moslems received healings there that they protected it with diligence during two world wars.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, to this place, so dear to the Christian community, my venerable Predecessors the Servants of God Paul VI and John Paul II came as pilgrims; the latter visited this Shrine on 30 November 1979, just over a year after the beginning of his Pontificate. Another of my Predecessors was in this Country not as Pope, but as the Papal Representative, from January 1935 to December 1944, Bl. John XXIII Angelo Roncalli, whose memory still enkindles great devotion and affection.

Benedict XVI: Wednesday Angelus Audience, Nov. 26, 2006 (delivered in Ephesus)

The First Love

But I have against you that you have left your first love. Remember therefore whence you has fallen, and repent and do the former works. But if not, I will come to you, and will move your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. However, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches! To him that conquers, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God

Rev 2:1-7

What is this first love if not the Blessed Virgin who arrived before Paul and was established in this place? How many times does Mary complain in her apparitions that She is forgotten, that children are not taught to invoke her intercession? She can't intervene against our free will. We have to ask her. It is She as New Eve who has the power to crush the Dragon in the Sky! How bitterly She complains that the angels of Churches are slow to acknowledge the authenticity of her apparitions, how slow to encourage the faithful to listen to her messages and experience miracles of healing and consolation that will strengthen them! How bitter it is that her messages are treated as silly counsels for old women, and not to be taken seriously, as if they are not a strong and supportive incentive to lead people to her Son!

Now, rather oddly, Ephesus is praised for hating the works of the Nicolaitans. Who are these people? I have checked every possible reference that I could get my hands on in the last twenty years. Nothing in ancient history alludes to a leader named Nicholas. So, I turned to modern history.

The Canonization of the Royal Martyrs Tsar Nicholas and Family

The Crown of Martyrdom has been bestowed upon Emperor Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra, Grand Duke Tsarevich Alexis, Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Marie, and Anastasia, and we now can be spiritually joyful in knowing that, from the act of Holy Canonization by the Council of the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, we have before the Throne of our God these precious, loving, martyrs praying and interceding on our humble behalf, we who are poor sinners. We now have spiritually a great litany of prayers for us all! Not only the Royal Martyrs Tsar Nicholas II and his Family, but also an abundance of New Martyrs, Confessors, and Saints praying for us also.

The canonizations were controversial for both branches of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1981, opponents noted Nicholas II's perceived weaknesses as a ruler and felt his actions led to the resulting Bolshevik Revolution. One priest of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad noted that martyrdom in the Russian Orthodox Church has nothing to do with the martyr's personal actions but is instead related to why he or she was killed. Other critics noted that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad appeared to be blaming Jewish revolutionaries for the deaths and equating the political assassination with a ritual murder.

There were those who rejected the family's classification as martyrs because they were not killed because of their religious faith. There was no proof that the execution was a ritual murder. Religious leaders in both Churches also had objections to canonizing the Tsar's family because they perceived him as a weak emperor whose incompetence led to the revolution, the suffering of his people and made him at least partially responsible for his own murder and the murders of his wife and children. For these opponents, the fact that the Tsar was, in private life, a kind man and a good husband and father did not override his poor governance of Russia.

The Holy Canonization of the Royal Martyrs Tsar Nicholas and Family of Russia (Aug. 20, 2000)

Nicholas did not start a heresy, but his cult stands for eastern Orthodox Christianity which engages in something that the Church of Rome (aka Ephesus) has opposed for a thousand years, namely, it's sycophant relationship to the reigning powers that be, be they the Moslem rulers or the Communist rulers, or the aristocracy. In opposing the authority of the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, they ended up clinging to the protection of secular powers. This tendency has ultimately kept the Orthodox Christians weak and disunited and unable to evangelize freely. Today the Russian Orthodox are forming a dangerous alliance with the Russian government which still has strong ties to Communism, and this is what Mary identifies as the Red Dragon.

The Bridegroom is Coming

Remember therefore whence you have fallen, and **repent** and do the former works. **But if not**, I will come to you, and will move your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Rev 2:5

We'll continue the seven letters next week. Thank you.