

Question: Some mystics speak of an imminent “second” or “glorious” coming of Jesus Christ. It seems that this is an interior and invisible coming of Christ that is now taking place with the gift of Living in the Divine Will. When the reign of the Divine Will in souls comes, can it be said to be a “second” and “glorious” coming of Jesus Christ?

Response: Several Church Fathers and Doctors write of a manifestation or coming of Christ that appears to occur between the Incarnation and the Final Coming in the flesh. They refer it as a “*hidden coming*” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem), a “*Sabbath-rest... a holy leisure after the labors of six thousand years since man was created*” (St. Augustine of Hippo) and a “*hidden, intermediary or middle coming*” (St. Bernard of Clairvaux). It is significant that these authors never address this immanent and middle coming as a “glorious” or “final” coming, but as one that is “hidden” and marked by “rest”. These characteristics are identical to those found in Luisa’s text where God, approximately 6,000 years after the creation of Adam, will “rest” in creation and reign “in souls” in a hidden manner who, in turn, become “living hosts”.

When addressing the “second coming in glory” of Jesus Christ the Catholic Catechism states:

*“Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the ‘mystery of iniquity’ 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 and of his Messiah come in the flesh”.*¹

*“Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though ‘it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.’ This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are ‘delayed’”.*²

Clearly the “second” and “glorious” coming” follows the “final trial”. This is pivotal.

Moreover, several Church Fathers, Doctors and ecclesiastical writers address a universal period of peace *before* the “final trial”, e.g., the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, Tertullian, St. Hippolytus, Origin, Methodius, Lactantius, etc., and these authors ascribe a two-fold reprisal and defeat of the devil to a period of antichristianity: the first occurs before the universal era of peace, and the second at its terminating point. Lactantius concurs with chapters 19 and 20 of the Book of Revelation, envisioning a enchainment of “the prince of devils” (who is enchained for a thousand years, while the “false prophet the beast” are thrown into the fiery lake), followed by a period in which “*all wickedness must be abolished from the earth, and righteousness reign for a*

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, St. Paul Books & Media (1994), 675.

² *Ibid.*, 673.

thousand years... the Son of the most high and mighty God shall come". At the completion of "the thousand years" of peace (when the devil is unchained, and raises up "Gog and Magog" for the final battle), Lactantius affirms that *"the last anger of God shall come upon the nations, and shall utterly destroy them and the world shall go down in a great conflagration..."* and there shall be *"the last judgment."*

Now, in spiritual literature there is a synonymous rendering of the *middle, glorious, second* and *final* coming of Christ, which unless doctrinally qualified, is open to erroneous interpretation. Let us recall articles 673 and 675 of the Catechism that affirms that the "second coming in glory" comes *after* the "final trial". Keeping with the catechetical language of the Church, it is safe to assert the second coming that *follows* the final trial is one and the same as final coming of Christ in the flesh. And yet, in some spiritual literature one discovers the expression, "second coming", as an event *preceding* the final trial.

Case and point. Fr. Stefano Gobbi's message of October 13, 1990 appears to confound the hidden and middle coming that *precedes* the final trial with the "second coming in glory" that the Catechism affirms *follows* the final trial.

"Today I announce to you that there is about to be born the new Church of light, which my son Jesus is forming for Himself in every part of the earth, so that it will be ready to receive Him, with faith and with joy, in the proximate moment of His second coming. The glorious reign of Christ, which will be established in your midst, with the second coming of Jesus in the world, is close at hand. This is His return in glory. This is His glorious return, to establish His reign in your midst and to bring all humanity, redeemed by His most precious blood, back to the state of His new terrestrial paradise."

St. Louis de Monfort appears to confound the hidden and middle coming with the "second coming":

"Towards the end of the world... Almighty God and his holy Mother are to raise up great saints who will surpass in holiness most other saints as much as the cedars of Lebanon tower above little shrubs... In the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary must be known and openly revealed by the Holy Spirit so that Jesus may be known, loved and served through her" .³

St. Faustina Kowalska appears to confound the middle coming with the "final and second coming":

"You will prepare the world for My final coming" .⁴

³ De Montfort, St. Louis Grignon, *True Devotion to Mary*, Rockford, IL Tan Books, 1985, nn.47, 49.

⁴ Kowalska, St. Maria Faustina, *Diary, Divine Mercy in My Soul*, Marians of the Immaculate Conception, Stockbridge (2000), entry 429.

*“You have to speak to the world about His great mercy and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Him who will come, not as a merciful Savior, but as a just Judge. Oh how terrible is that day! Determined is the day of justice, the day of divine wrath. The angels tremble before it. Speak to souls about this great mercy while it is still the time for granting mercy”.*⁵

At first sight, it would appear that St. Faustina is preparing us for the imminent return of Jesus’ in glory and the end of the world. However, when asked if this is what Faustina’s words meant, Pope Benedict XVI answered:

*“If one took this statement in a chronological sense, as an injunction to get ready, as it were, immediately for the Second Coming, it would be false”.*⁶

In sum, the Church clearly places the “second and glorious coming” of Christ *after* the final trial, to suggest that it is one and the same as Christ’s final coming the flesh which occurs at the end of the world. And yet the aforesaid spiritual authors place it *before* the final trial. How proceed beyond this impasse?

First, in spiritual literature, one may affirm that the expression, “second or glorious coming” of Christ, signifies a period in human history *after* a tribulation and chastisement that *precedes* the three respective events of the thousand-years of peace, the final trial and the final coming. The spiritual authors call it a “second” coming inasmuch as it constitutes Christ’s reign in souls on earth through the outpouring of the gift of Living in the Divine Will, and disposes the world for his final coming. Consider the following chronology of events revealed in the chart below.

<p>Tribulation and Chastisement at the hands of <i>The False Prophet and the Beast</i> (Rev. 13.11-18) foretold by Mary in her many approved modern-day apparitions</p>	<p>The False Prophet and the Beast are thrown into the fiery lake, and Satan is enchained for 1000 Years (Rev. 19.20; 20:2-3)</p>	<p>Intermediary, hidden, middle coming of Jesus foretold Church Fathers, Doctors and Mystics. The 1000 Years Peace (Rev. 20.4): coincides with the Era of Peace; the Reign of God’s Divine Will on earth; the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart; the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus</p>	<p>After the 1000 Years Peace, Satan is released from confinement (Rev. 20.3; for the “Final Trial” (Rev. 20.7; CCC 673, 675) at hands of <i>Gog and Magog</i> (Rev. 20.8)</p>	<p>Second and Final Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory and in the flesh; Satan is thrown into the fiery lake Rev. 20.10); the General Judgment (Rev. 20.13); the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21.1)</p>
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⁵ Ibid., entry 635.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, Ignatius Press (2010), p. 180-181.

It may be said that this coming is what the Church Fathers and Doctors refer to this as a “hidden”, “intermediary”, “middle” coming or “Sabbath rest” that *precedes* the final coming of Christ. It is a “hidden” coming inasmuch as Christ through the gift of Living in the Divine Will reigns in a hidden manner in and through souls who become “living hosts” and in whose souls his “Real Life” abides; it is a “middle” and “intermediary” coming inasmuch as it occurs in between Christ’s first coming in Bethlehem and his Final coming at the end of the world; it is a “Sabbath Rest” inasmuch as God rests in and with creation on the “seventh” day, i.e., the Sabbath day, which several Fathers envision as a foretelling of God’s rest with all creation in the seven thousandth millennium since man’s creation.

Second, in catechetical literature, the expression, “second or glorious coming” of Christ, signifies his “final coming” in the flesh that *follows* the thousand-year reign of peace and the final trial – it is a visible, not hidden, coming of Christ. The hidden coming disposes the Church for this second and final coming, as is evident in the writings of St. Paul which I report below.

In writing of the future Church as a holy and immaculate bride before Christ’s final coming, St. Paul chose the Greek word “immaculate” to best describe her positive quality of pure and perfect obedience to God’s will. When Paul wrote from his prison cell the letter to the Church in Ephesus,⁷ it was not intended for Ephesians only, but for the purpose of making God’s plan of universal salvation known to all.⁸ It was clearly a letter intended to reveal the Holy Spirit’s world mission to the Church. Paul’s efforts in Ephesus, which lasted well over two years,⁹ emphasized the unity that would come about for both Jews and Gentiles within the triune God.¹⁰ This opens before us when we read his description of the future Church that is presented to Christ in a “*holy and immaculate*” state before his final return in glory. If the Church will be presented before Christ in a “holy and immaculate” state, then something will have to provide for her holiness and immaculacy. In his Letter to the Ephesians Paul indicates that it is the groom who seeks to “*sanctify and cleanse*” his Church “*by the bath of water*” in order “*to present the Church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (immaculate).*” In commenting on this passage St. Pope John Paul II affirms:

*“The washing of water” serves, on the part of the groom “to present the Church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle...” The text quoted indicates that the Christ-spouse himself takes care to adorn the spouse-Church. He is concerned that she should be beautiful with the beauty of grace... Baptism is only the beginning from which the figure of the glorious Church will emerge.*¹¹

⁷ Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20.

⁸ Eph 3:9-10.

⁹ Acts 19:10.

¹⁰ Eph 1:3-15; 2:22.

¹¹ John Paul II. *Theology of the Body*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 1997, p.317.

St. Pope John Paul II attributes to Christ the work of preparing and adorning the Church through the action of grace. Admittedly, the bride's cleansing and sanctification proceed from the Church's sacramental graces. The sacraments are certainly an indispensable means for the attainment of Church's beauty. However, since grace is directly mediated to the Church through the merits of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit,¹² Christ is said to effect the work of grace in the Sacraments. In this sense, it is Christ who "presents the Church to himself" through the *Holy Spirit* and the *Sacraments*. The Immaculate Church during the era of universal peace will, therefore, proceed from Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments:

*If before that final end there is to be a period, more or less prolonged, of triumphant sanctity, such a result will be brought about, not by the apparition of the Person of Christ in Majesty but by the operation of those powers of sanctification which are now at work, the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments of the Church.*¹³

Paul further describes the Church's sanctification as the fruit of the "charisms" or "gifts" the Spirit imparts. The charisms serve "*to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God... to the full stature of Christ*" (Eph 4:11-13). If the "unity of faith" and "knowledge in the Son of God" are wrought by the Holy Spirit's power at work in the Sacraments and through his charisms, it advances the teaching that they are the means by which the Church approaches her state of Immaculacy.

That the Church will experience a universal unity of faith in the Son of God is rooted in the event of Christ's virgin birth. Just as Christ was unable to come to earth save through the immaculate womb of his mother, he can neither return to earth without his expectant Immaculate Church. St. Peter alludes to this nuptial encounter in his first letter when he assures her of her promised "*inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven... for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last days*" (1 Pt 1:4-5), and St. John bolsters this idea when presenting the Church as a community of holy ones dressed in white garments who arise after the days of Christian persecution.¹⁴

In light of the preceding, I present in tabloid form a summary of the aforementioned teachings of the Church and approved spiritual authors regarding the second and glorious coming of Jesus Christ.

¹² CCC, 152; 243, 685, 686.

¹³ *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952), p. 1140.

¹⁴ In Scripture the "white garment" not only refers to a totally new creature reborn in Baptism, but to one that is made immaculate and holy (Rev 7:14; 19:8).

- After a period of tribulation and chastisement in which a faithful remnant will inherit the earth, Christ establishes the universal reign of his Divine Will in the souls of men for a prolonged period of peace in human history, symbolized by the expression “one thousand years.” All creation enjoys the glorious freedom of the sons of God. This period of peace is referred to by many as the Eucharistic reign of Jesus (in souls who become ‘living hosts’ and in whom his ‘Real Life’ abides); the triumph of the Immaculate Heart; the Reign of the Divine Will on earth; the New Pentecost.
- Shortly before the end of the universal period of peace, Satan is released. He assembles all the pagan nations to wage war on God’s holy city. The pagan nations surround the holy city for the ‘final trial’, “then the last anger of God shall come upon the nations, and shall utterly destroy them” and the world shall go down in a great conflagration.
- At the end of the final trial Christ returns in the flesh, in glory and power for the General Judgment of the living and the dead, in which the righteous will be raised to eternal happiness and the unrighteous to everlasting punishments.
- God renews the universe: the heavens are folded up, God creates New Heavens and a New Earth, and men are transformed “into the similitude of angels” and rejoice in God’s beatific vision for all eternity.