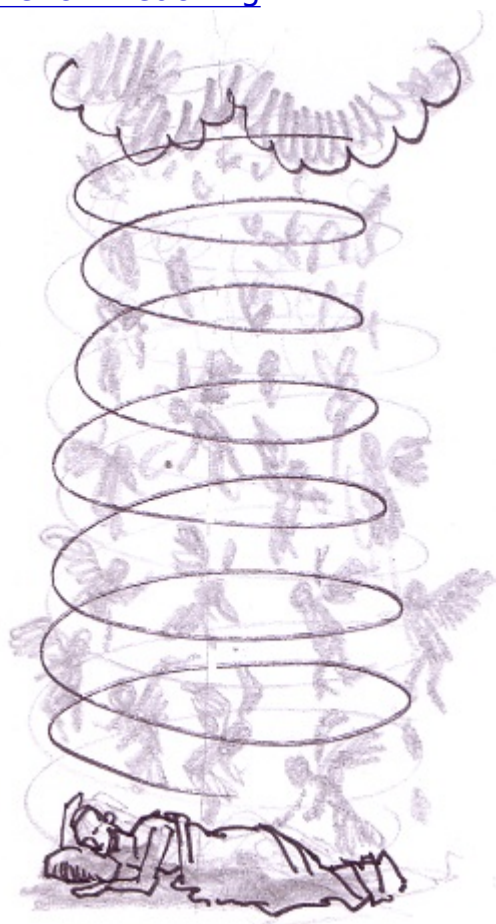


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by Pat Marrin

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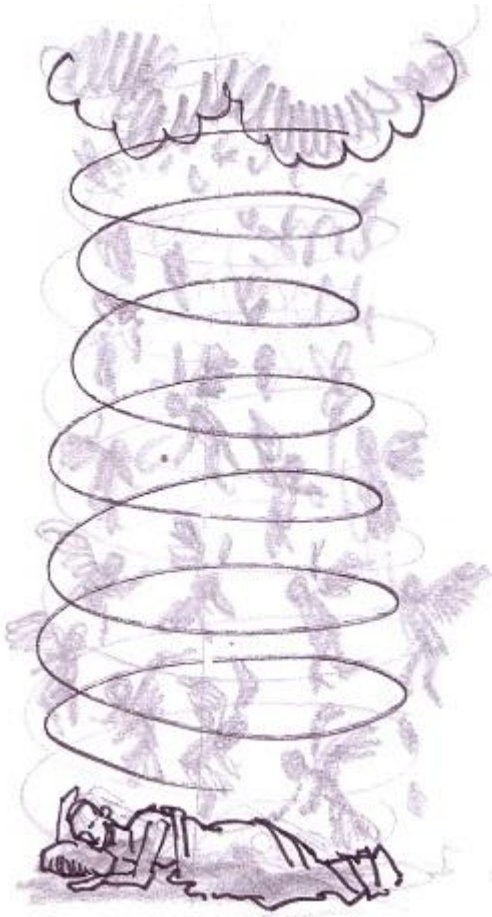
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August 23, 2020

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“You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

Rev 21:9b-14; John 1:45-51

Both readings today are about connecting heaven and earth. The seer in the Book of Revelation beholds Jerusalem descending from heaven to earth as the bride of the Lamb. The holy city is made of layers of precious stones on four gated sides of what has been compared to a Rubik Cube involving the number twelve. The recitation of the text was intended to bring the reader into a mystical state based on the overlay of the Jewish and Christian liturgical cycles and the Zodiac, triggering a vision of the divine order found in creation.

In John’s Gospel, Nathaniel meets Jesus and is astonished to realize that someone he had dismissed for being from backwoods Nazareth had seen him at prayer under a fig tree, where he was apparently reflecting on Jacob’s dream (Genesis 28:10-19). Nathaniel realizes that Jesus is somehow the connection between heaven and earth from that scene of angels ascending and descending on Jacob. Nathaniel has been

granted a glimpse of the Incarnation, the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus, who is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

This Gospel was chosen for today's feast of St. Bartholomew, named as an Apostle in the synoptics but as Nathaniel in the fourth Gospel. What is important is that in the call of the Apostles, when Jesus looks at each one, it is as though he sees everything, both past and the future. This creates an intimate bond between these 12 men and Jesus because he "knows" them in a way that reveals him to be God. No other "look" could have this power, and it draws them to drop everything and follow him. When Peter is called, he realizes that Jesus sees his sinfulness but is choosing him anyway.

Each of us is meant for the same "look of love" that invites us to entrust ourselves to Jesus. As Peter expresses later in the Gospel when many are leaving Jesus, "You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:60). In Sunday's Gospel we learned that the gates of hell were in ancient Caesarea Philippi. Today we are told where to find the gates of heaven. Jesus is heaven's gate, our way to God.

Because of this, everywhere is holy ground. Every human experience holds the possibility of an encounter with God. By his Incarnation Jesus has opened our humanity to its divine destiny. Baptism makes us gateways between heaven and earth, miracles to one another and Good News to everyone we meet. We affirm this each time we say the Our Father by bringing God's name and will to earth as it is in heaven.

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