

## What Catechists Should Know About the End Times

Biblical fundamentalists, through the popular *Left Behind* books (by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins) and movies like *The Seventh Sign*, *The Omen* and *End of Days*, have reinvented the end of the world for many people in our culture. "Rapture" theology has them afraid that God may snatch them up to heaven without warning, or even worse, leave them behind. Every Catholic catechist should be familiar with these books, especially the children's series. While *Left Behind* may appear to be based on the Bible, it actually promotes non-biblical fear counter to the Church's hope-filled teachings about end times.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* points out that teaching about *eschatology* (end times and last things) has been weak in Catholic faith formation. Therefore, it is important for catechists to be aware of what the Church does and does not teach about the end of time, so they can help children and youth understand it in the light of what popular culture and their fundamentalist acquaintances promote.

Fundamentalists, say the end will begin with the Jews reclaiming Jerusalem, followed by the secret Rapture, seven years of Tribulation, Anti-Christ, Armageddon, coming of Christ, and the Last Judgment. Our Catholic belief is that the time of Tribulation for the church began two thousand years ago with the coming of Christ. We acknowledge that near the end of time there will be Anti-Christ(s) – things or people that draw us away from Christ. We believe in the second coming of Christ, and that the Last Judgment will be based on our acceptance or refusal of divine love, indicated by how we treated others. In *Left Behind*, people are judged on whether their theology is "correct" or if they were sexually moral, not how they treated others who were in need.

We, as Catholics, believe the Book of Revelation is about the Emperor Nero, written in symbols and "code", so that John could get away with saying negative things about the Roman Empire. It is not a detailed description about the end of time, but a document written to give hope to Christians suffering persecution and facing death for their faith.

### Some Resources – End Times

*Reading or viewing these resources and providing a written report to your principal or director of religious education can be applied to diocesan catechist certification credit in "knowing"*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - sections 668-682.

Currie, David B. *Rapture! The End Times Error that Leaves the Bible Behind*, Manchester, NH, Sophia Institute Press, 2003.

Fachet, Rev. Paul, OFM, *Book of Revelation* (video) Mystic, CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 1999.

Nantais, David E. and Michael Simone "Apocalypse When?" *America*, August 18-25, 2003, pp. 18-20.

Olsen, Carl, *Will Catholics Be Left Behind?* San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2003

Piechowski, Otto R., *Catholic Teaching: The End Times*, Villa Maria, PA, Center for Learning, 2000.

Ralph, Margaret Nutting, *Book of Revelation* (Video) Croton-on-Hudson, NY, American Video Cassette Educ. Library, 1989.

Ralph, Margaret Nutting, *The Bible and the End of the World: Should We be Afraid?* New York, Paulist, 1997.

Thigpen, Paul, *The Rapture Trap: A Catholic Response to End Times Fever*, West Chester, PA, Ascension Press, 2001.

USCCB Department of Education *The Living Light*, Winter, 2003, Vol. 40 Special issue: "The End of Time and Last Things" – articles on Revelation, the *Left Behind* books, and more.

Wales, Sean, C.Ss.R. *What You Should Know About the End Times*, Liguori, MO, Liguori, 2004.