



Episode 3: The Role of the Parishioner

SUMMARY

We Christians are here on earth as exiles. Many of us grow up in middle class Christianity. The danger with that is that we have everything we want and as a consequence we don't really long for heaven.

Central to the Christian message is that we spend our lives here on earth *longing* for our true home which is in heaven.

"Parishioner" comes from the Greek *paroikos* which is also the root word for "pariah." It is the perennial reminder that we don't belong here; our home is heaven.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into *this earthly exile* that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. He joins the entire community of mankind to Himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise. (n°. 83)

In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory. (n°. 8)

It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. (n°. 2)

IN THE TRADITION

So then you are no longer strangers (*zenoi*) and sojourners (*paroikoi*), but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Lord and Creator of all, and especially of your creature man, you are the God and Father and ruler of your children; you are the Lord of life and death, you are the guardian and benefactor of our souls. You fashion and transform all things in their due season through your creative Word, as you know to be best in your deep wisdom and providence. Receive now those who have gone ahead of us in our journey from this life.

And receive us too at the proper time, when you have guided us in our bodily life as long as may be for our profit. Receive us prepared indeed by fear of you, but not troubled, not shrinking back on that day of death or uprooted by force like those who are lovers of the world and the flesh. Instead, may we set out eagerly for that everlasting and blessed life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Saint Gregory Nazianzen

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

✠ “Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. “The promise [of

seeing God] surpasses all beatitude... In Scripture, to see is to possess... Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive.’ ”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), n°. 2548

✠ “It remains for the holy people to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ's faithful mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.”

CCC, n°. 2549

IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth, with your servant our Pope and our Bishop, the Order of Bishops, all the clergy, and the entire people you have gained for your own.

Eucharistic Prayer III

For your mighty deeds, O God of mercy, may your people offer endless thanks, and, by observing the age-old disciplines along their pilgrim journey, may they merit to come and behold you for ever. Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer over the People, Friday after Ash Wednesday

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What prayers of the Mass remind you of the Christian's status as exiles?
2. How can we become more aware in our daily lives of the importance of longing for heaven?
3. Reflect on John 17:9-19. How can we be “present in this world and yet not at home in it”?