

March 24, 2019 - OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN!

Do you believe that your citizenship is in Heaven? Do you recall last week's second reading from the joyful letter of St Paul to the Philippians (3:17 -21)? St. Paul could not be clearer addressing one of his favorite communities because of their strong faith and unity: ***"Our citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body."*** (Philippians 3:20-21). Like the Philippians, we should find **joy and hope** in our new citizenship! St Paul does not say that our citizenship "will be" in Heaven. No, he says that it "is" in heaven right now! To be a citizen on earth means that we belong to a particular country, and that citizenship gives us rights and obligations. Since our baptism, we have all become sons and daughters of God, and are called to belong to the Kingdom of God! Our citizenship is in Heaven and from Heaven our savior Jesus Christ will change our lowly, humble body into a glorified body. This is the same transformation that happened to the body of Jesus the man after his resurrection. This is our Hope in eternal life with God.

In his second letter to the Corinthians (5:20), St Paul identifies himself as **an ambassador for Christ**, imploring us on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. He also encourages us to imitate him. So we too are called to be Ambassadors of Christ. We are called to "represent" Christ when engaging co-workers or friends in spiritual and moral conversation. This is what an Ambassador for a particular country does on earth: representing his or her country of origin in another country. Many countries now allow dual citizenship. When I became an American citizen seven years ago, I was allowed to keep my French passport. In human terms in today's world, one can use the concept of passport to keep the language of St. Paul as Ambassador of Christ and Citizen of Heaven. We need a valid passport to enter into Heaven. We all come from God (Heaven) and we are all called to return to Heaven! We can all get a passport from the State Department which allows us to travel to foreign countries, giving us a right to re-enter the US. If we wish to keep traveling, we need to keep our "earthly" passport valid, by renewing it at the State Department when the validity date has expired. In a similar way, we need to keep our "heavenly" passport valid.

In the last few weeks, we have said many times that the **Mass is Heaven on Earth** (St John Paul II). We come to Mass to have an encounter with God. The church is the House of God. God is always present in our Tabernacle (that is why we genuflect to the Tabernacle as a sign of humility and respect for God, just before we enter our pews). Do we need a special entry ticket or a valid passport to come to Mass for this amazing encounter with Jesus (listening to His Word, adoring Him at the Elevation of the Host and Chalice at Consecration, and receiving Him at Communion)? We do not have a check point in our church. Everyone is welcome to open the glass doors leading to that encounter with God. One parishioner suggested to me last week that we may write on those glass doors: **"door of entry into Heaven"** or simply **"Heaven entry"**. It may deepen our desire to come to Mass to be with God, interact with Him, worship Him, Adore Him, and Receive Him at Communion. It can also remind everyone we are entering Holy Ground, and we need to be Reconciled with God (confession), not only necessary to receive Jesus at communion (receiving Jesus in mortal sin is also a mortal sin) but also most desirable to participate actively and fully into the many prayers of the Mass and go more deeply in the understanding of the mysteries of the Mass itself.

We may think of the Narthex as the border between Heaven and earth. Someone last week suggested to see our exit door as a **service entrance**: once we have been fed spiritually at Mass (Heaven on Earth), we are returning to our homes and workplaces where we are all called to **serve** for the Glory of God! Yes, at end of Mass, we are sent to announce the Good News of the Gospel, and to glorify the Lord by our lives.

Come Holy Spirit, help us to retain our citizenship in heaven! Come Holy Spirit, help us to desire deepening our relationship with God through attending Mass regularly! Come Holy Spirit, help us to participate fully at Mass and with joy, by opening our eyes, our ears and our hearts! Come Holy Spirit! Keep blessing the 200 parishioners participating in the **Gift of the Mass** (three weeks complete, three to go)! Come Holy Spirit, encourage other parishioners to join. It is not too late!



One in Christ,
Father Alain