

The Church Triumphant.

No 11

Our Western society has become extremely individualistic. It no longer has a strong sense of community. Human beings are no more than a collection of individuals. Consumerism has also taken its toll. Everything seems to have become a preference - even church. Church hopping and shopping is becoming a problem in many congregations. If one church does not meet the perceived needs, another can always be tried. Consequently, some congregations grow, others lose members and some even drop out of church altogether. The latter claim that a Christian does not need to belong to a church. How different from the Biblical picture of the church! And I am thinking specifically of the beautiful model of the Church Triumphant in heaven.

The church is not a building, but people. Our Lord gathers out of the human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, by His Spirit and Word, a Church chosen to everlasting life (LD XXI, q.a.54). On earth the Church is united with the Triune God through faith and baptism, prayer and worship. We are in a covenant relationship with God. Our covenant God's faithfulness has no temporal limits and therefore cannot cease when death calls us out of this life. We then join the Church Triumphant, the Church of the Old and the New Covenant, the Church as she was redeemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb throughout the ages of history. When God says of His covenant people in Old Testament times: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," He confesses that these dead patriarchs are also His. God will not forsake His people. Death can never break fellowship with Him. And the same truth holds for His covenant people in the New Testament age. The union between Christ and His people can never be dissolved or the covenant made void.

Heaven is a sociable habitation. The redeemed in heaven are in perfect covenant fellowship with their Lord and with one another. They may not have known each other on earth but in heaven they know each other as members of God's family. It is impossible to have fellowship with Christ and yet remain strangers. The redeemed have joined the "thousands of thousands of angels in joyful assembly" as well as "the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" (Hebr.2: 23). They do not live in heaven in private enjoyment of Jesus but in holy unity as God's people. The devil cannot break the perfect harmony the heavenly inhabitants experience. They sit round about the Father's table in love and with one accord. They join together in concert and sing anthems of praise in the heavenly choir. Individualism is not known in heaven. Together, the saints eat from the fruit of life and drink from the water of life. Together, they fall on their faces and worship the Lord forever. Together, they serve their Saviour.