

Fr. Perozich comments —

Is there really something extraordinary about Christians in 2019 in the world, especially the first world where we are so materially blessed?

Or am I too indistinguishable from other men in how I live, how I vote, what I proclaim, what I value?

IMHO (in my humble opinion) I am too blessed materially. I have a sufficiency to pay my bills, feed myself, and live in modest comfort in a 600 sq ft apartment. I am better off than most in the world, and this brings me a spiritual complacency in my life which I must fight daily if I am to be the Christian that God calls me to be.

I do not see Catholics as being extraordinary, rather I see us as being indistinguishable from the rest of the world in 2019.

Look at our Catholic politicians who say, “I would never have an abortion, but I cannot tell a woman that she cannot.” If you are a Christian, you must use your office of influence to save her soul and the baby’s life, even if it results in the loss of your elected office with all its manifold privileges.

Look at Catholics who say that God made people the way they are when such folk try to change their gender or practice unnatural sex.

Look at clergy who have everything paid for, especially those who hold higher office, and who demand that the government pay for all other people the way the church pays for the clergy.

Catholics divorce at the same rate as non believers.

Catholics are leaving the church or the practice of the faith, no longer seeing themselves as sojourners in a world to which they are passing through to get to heaven, rather as settlers in this world and who belong to it.

The world with all it offers has become our final home.

Salvation from sin and death for goodness and eternal life takes a back seat in the church to worldly concerns of migration, sexuality, wealth distribution, the meme of “fairness, equality, justice, and rights” as defined by the world rather than by God.

Enough with the chastisement of myself and of you.

Read Diognetus’ letter. Take it to heart, and live as a traveler through this world, using what is needed to get you to heaven, leaving all attachment to it behind.

It is not easy for me, but it is part of the fight and part of the journey into the heart of the Trinity.

From a letter to Diognetus

(Nn. 5-6: Funk, 397-401)

The Christian in the world

Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labour under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law.

Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself.