

1 Peter and a Parish of “Exiles” (3rd Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1 Peter 1:17-21—The Time of Your Exile

¹⁷ And if you invoke as Father him who *judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.* ¹⁸ You know that *you were ransomed* from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but *with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* ²⁰ *He was destined before the foundation of the world* but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:17-21)

1. Final Judgment: “according to deeds” (Greek *kata to ekastou ergon*) (1:17)
2. Exile: “exile” (Greek *parokias*, “sojourn,” lit. “dwelling beside,” *par-oikos*) (1:17).

Daniel Keating: “Sojourning” is literally “dwelling beside” (*paroikia*)... Why is this instructive? Our English word “parish” derives from *paroikia*. The local church—our parish—is meant to be the gathering of Christian “sojourners” and “aliens” who are far from their true home. And what is our *true* home? It is where God dwells...¹

3. New Exodus: “Ransomed” by the blood of “unblemished” lamb (1:19; cf. Exod 12:5)

[W]e have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and to *an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven* for you... (1 Peter 1:3-4)

4. Predestination: “Destined” (Greek *proegnōsmenou*) b/f “foundation” of “world” (1:20)
5. Confidence: through him you have “confidence” or “trust” (Greek *pistos*) (1:21)

¹³ These all died in *faith* (Greek *pistis*), not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were *strangers and exiles on the earth*... ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a *better country, that is, a heavenly one.* (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Living Tradition

Bede the Venerable: “Live out the time of your life here in fear,” lest namely through sloth and carelessness you become unworthy of so great a father, and, while you may live

¹ Daniel Keating, *First and Second Peter, Jude* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 45-46.

out the time of your life here safely, you may not be able to reach the promised happiness of the fatherland. (Bede of Northumbria, *Commentary on 1 Peter* 1:17; trans. David Hurst)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. What does Peter mean when he speaks about his readers being in “exile” (Greek *paroikia*)? What are the implications of this imagery for the way we see parishes today?

2. According to early church tradition, to whom was the first letter of Peter written?

For Further Reading

1. Keating, Daniel. *First and Second Peter, Jude*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
2. Bede the Venerable. *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985.
3. Bray, Gerald. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament XI. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000.