

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Who Art in Heaven

But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20

Insight

It had been a near-perfect day. The resort where the family was staying was comfortable. The staff was courteous and hastened to assist them in any way they could. While the accommodations and amenities helped to make their vacation very pleasant, it was the fact that the whole family was gathered together that made this time special.

Everyone had come: the immediate family—husband, wife, and children—along with both sets of grandparents, *his* sister and *her* family. The presence of these loved ones heightened this experience into something unique and superlative.

They had just finished a long, leisurely supper together. The food had been fantastic. So had the conversation, with lots of laughter and reminiscing. Even the kids had joined in. Some of the adults were gathered on the balcony of a suite. They were sipping wine and keeping an eye on the kids, while other adults strolled on the beach and in the surf. The sun began to set against the far horizon of the ocean.

Peaceful, contented, he sighed, smiled and simply said, “this is heavenly!”

For Reflection . . .

Because it defies exact description and precise understanding, Sacred Scripture speaks of Heaven in images.

What do you imagine Heaven will be like?

What earthly realities trigger in you an appreciation for or understanding of Heaven?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2794–2802

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 41, 154, 485

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 209, 586

Church Teaching

When we pray “who art in heaven,” it is as if we are intentionally pushing beyond the earthly boundaries that hem us in and define so much of our experiences. We are avoiding the closed-in stance of the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable who “prayed with himself” (Luke 18:9–14). Our prayer reaches to Heaven.

The Home of God

In looking beyond ourselves to Heaven, the home of God, we acknowledge a complex reality. God is our Creator and Wholly Other. He is “beyond us.” He is in Heaven. Yet Heaven is not a physical place, but a state or way of being. In other words, “heaven” denotes total union with God. It means being drawn up and participating in the divine love of the Blessed Trinity.

Since “heaven” is not a location, but instead describes our total and perfect incorporation into the life of God, we are also acknowledging in the Lord’s Prayer that we can, even now, experience some aspects of that blessed union with the divine.

Close to Our Heart

Our homeland of Heaven beckons us. Even though it may be imperfectly experienced or veiled from us, we begin to taste or glimpse heavenly realities in *this* world, in our current state of being. The transcendent God dwells in holy hearts and thus draws those hearts ever closer to him—as long as those hearts are open to his love.