

1 "The Church a Home for the Lonely"
2 *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 4 sermon 12
3 St. John Henry Newman
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5 "Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ
6 Jesus." Ephes. ii. 6.

7 DID we from our youth up follow the guidings of God's grace, we should, without
8 reasoning and without severe trial, understand that heaven is an object claiming our
9 highest love and most persevering exertions. Such doubtless is the blessedness of
10 some persons: such in a degree is perchance the blessedness of many. There are
11 those who, like Samuel, dwell in the Temple of God holy and undefiled from infancy,
12 and, after the instance of John the Baptist, are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, if not as he,
13 from their mother's womb, yet from their second birth in Holy Baptism. And there are
14 others who possess this great gift more or less, in whom the divine light has been
15 preserved, even though it has been latent; not quenched or overborne by open sin,
16 even though it has not been from the first duly prized and cherished. Many there are,
17 one would hope, who keep their baptismal robes unstained, even though the wind and
18 storm of this world, and the dust of sloth and carelessness for a while discolour them; till
19 in due season they arouse them from their dreams, and, before it is too late, give their
20 hearts to God. All these, whether they have followed Him from infancy, or from
21 childhood, or from boyhood, or from youth, or from opening manhood, have never been
22 wedded to this world; they have never given their hearts to it, or vowed obedience or
23 done folly in things of time and sense. And therefore they are able, from the very power
24 of God's grace, as conveyed to them the ordinances of the Gospel, to understand that
25 the promise of heaven is the greatest, most blessed promise which could be given.

26 Others turn from God, and fall into courses of wilful sin, and they of course lose the
27 divine light originally implanted; and if they are recovered are recovered by a severer
28 discipline. They are recovered by finding disappointment and suffering from that which
29 they had hoped would bring them good; they learn to love God and prize heaven, not by
30 baptismal grace, but by trial of the world; they seek the world, and they are driven by the
31 world back again to God. The world is blessed to them, in God's good providence, as an
32 instrument of His grace transmuted from evil to good, as if a second sacrament, doing
33 over again what was done in infancy, and then undone. They are led to say, with St.
34 Peter, "Lord, to whom *shall* we go?" for they have tried the world, and it fails them; they
35 have trusted it, and it deceives them; they have leant upon it, and it pierces them
36 through; they have sought it for indulgence, and it has scourged them for their penance.
37 O blessed lot of those, whose wanderings though they wander, are thus overruled; that
38 what they lose of the free gift of God, they regain by his compulsory remedies!

39 But almost all men, whether they are thereby moved to return to God or not, will on
40 experience feel, and confess, and that in no long time, that the world is not enough for
41 their happiness; and they accordingly seek means to supply their need, though they do
42 not go to religion for it. Though they will not accept God's remedy, yet they confess that

a remedy is needed, and have recourse to what they think will prove such. Though they may not love God and his holy heaven, yet they find they cannot take up with the world, or cast their lot with it wholly, much as they may wish it. This leads me to the subject which I propose to consider, as suggested by the text; viz. the need which mankind lies under of some shelter, refuge, rest, home or sanctuary from the outward world, and the shelter or secret place which God has provided for them in Christ.

By the world, I mean all that meets a man in intercourse with his fellow men, whether in public or in private, all that is new, strange, and without natural connexion with him. This outward world is at first sight most attractive and exciting to the generality of men. The young commonly wish to enter into it as if it would fulfil all their wants and hopes. They wish to enter into life, as it is called. Their hearts beat, as they anticipate the time when they shall, in one sense or other, be their own masters. At home, or at school, they are under restraint, and thus they come to look forward to the liberty of the world, and the independence of being in it, as a great good. According to their rank in life, they wish to get into service, or they wish to go into business, or they wish to be principals in trade, or they wish to enter into the world's amusements and gaieties, or they look forward with interest to some profession or employment which stirs their ambition and promises distinction.

And when their wish is gratified, for a time all things perhaps go as they would have them. There is so much novelty, and so much interest in what takes place out of doors, that they find themselves as if in a new state of existence, and in one way or other "rejoice in their youth." Happy they who are otherwise circumstanced; for there *are* a number after all who may be said to have no youth; who from weak health, or from narrow circumstances, or from unkind superiors, or from family affliction, or from other causes, though in the world, have scarcely been exposed at all to its seductions, or have seen in it any thing to delight them, or to arrest their imagination or reason. God's providence has so ordered it for them, that, whatever be their peculiar trials and temptations, these do not come from the gaieties or the occupations of life. From the first they have only had experience of the world as a hard master, and owe it nothing. But whatever be our lot, whether to have had enjoyment from the world or not, whether we have not had the temptation of it, or not felt it, or felt it and overcome it, or felt it and been overcome, all men, whether religious or not, find in no long time that the world is insufficient for their happiness, and look elsewhere for repose.

Surely this is the case on all sides of us; the outward world is found not to be enough for man, and he looks for some refuge near him, more intimate, more secret, more pure, more calm and stable. This is a main reason and a praiseworthy one, why a great number of the better sort of persons look forward to marriage as the great object of life. They call it being settled, and so it is. The mind finds nothing to satisfy it in the employments and amusements of life, in its excitements, struggles, anxieties, efforts, aims, and victories. Supposing a man to make money, to get on in life, to rise in society, to gain power, whether in a higher or lower sphere, this does not suffice; he wants a home, he wants a centre on which to place his thoughts and affections, a secret dwelling-place which may soothe him after the troubles of the world, and which may be

86 his hidden stay and support wherever he goes, and dwell in his heart, though it be not
87 named upon his tongue. The world may seduce, may terrify, may mislead, may enslave,
88 but it cannot really inspire confidence and love. There is no rest for us, except in
89 quietness, confidence, and affection; and hence all men, without taking religion into
90 account, seek to make themselves a home, as the only need of their nature, or are
91 unhappy if they be without one. Thus they witness against the world, even though they
92 be children of the world; witness against it equally with the holiest and most self-
93 denying, who have by faith overcome it.

94 Here then Christ finds us, weary of that world in which we are obliged to live and act,
95 whether as willing or unwilling slaves to it. He finds us needing and seeking a home,
96 and making one, as we best may, by means of the creature, since it is all we can do.
97 The world, in which our duties lie, is as waste as the wilderness, as restless and
98 turbulent as the ocean, as inconstant as the wind and weather. It has no substance in it,
99 but is like a shade or phantom; when you pursue it, when you try to grasp it, it escapes
100 from you, or it is malicious, and does you a mischief. We need something which the
101 world cannot give: this is what we need, and this it is which the Gospel has supplied.

102 I say, that our Lord Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins on the Cross, and ascending on
103 high, left not the world as He found it, but left a blessing behind Him. He left in the world
104 what before was not in it,—a secret home, for faith and love to enjoy, wherever found, in
105 spite of the world around us. Do you ask what it is? the chapter from which the text is
106 taken describes it. It speaks of "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus
107 Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone;" of "the Building fitly framed" and "growing
108 unto an Holy Temple in the Lord;" of "a Habitation of God through the Spirit." This is the
109 Church of God, which is our true home of God's providing, His own heavenly court,
110 where He dwells with Saints and Angels, into which He introduces us by a new birth,
111 and in which we forget the outward world and its many troubles.

112 The Jews had some such refuge in their own material Temple, though of course it was
113 far inferior to that which Christ has provided. Thrice a year did all the males from every
114 quarter go up to Jerusalem to appear before God in it; and some holy persons were
115 even allowed to dwell in it. Such were the prophet Samuel in his youth, and Anna the
116 prophetess in her old age; not to mention Priests and Levites, who were ever there by
117 office. The Temple rose stately and beautiful upon Mount Zion, invited the worshipper,
118 admitted him, hid from him the outward world, with all its miseries and offences, and
119 brought him immediately into God's Presence. No wonder, then, that David speaks with
120 such devout affection of it, and with such sorrow and longing when he is away. "O how
121 amiable are Thy dwellings," he says, "Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and
122 longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living
123 God ... Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be alway praising Thee ...
124 One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the
125 house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness." And again, "My soul is
126 athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the
127 presence of God?" "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and
128 bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling; and that I may go unto the altar of God,

129 even unto the God of my joy and gladness; and upon the harp will I give thanks unto
130 Thee, O God, my God." And again, "Behold now, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the
131 Lord: ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord, even in the courts of the house of
132 our God. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord." [Ps. lxxxiv; xlii; xliii;
133 cxxxiv.]

134 Such was the Jewish Temple; but, besides other deficiencies, as being visible and
135 material, it was confined to one place. It could not be a home for the whole world, nay
136 not for one nation, but only for a few out of the multitude. But the Christian Temple is
137 invisible and spiritual, and hence admits of being every where. "The kingdom of God,"
138 says our Lord, speaking of it, "cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo
139 here, or Lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." And again to the
140 Samaritan woman, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at
141 Jerusalem, worship the Father ... The hour cometh, and now is, when the true
142 worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to
143 worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and
144 in truth." [Luke xvii. 20, 21. John iv. 21-24.] "In spirit and in truth;" for unless his
145 Presence were invisible, it could not be real. That which is seen is not real; that which is
146 material is dissoluble; that which is in time is temporary; that which is local is butpartial.
147 But the Christian Temple is wherever Christians are found in Christ's Name; it is as fully
148 in each place as if it were in no other; and we may enter it, and appear among its holy
149 inmates, God's heavenly family, as really as the Jewish worshipper betook himself to
150 the visible courts of the Temple. We see nothing; but this I repeat, is a condition
151 necessary to its being every where. It would not be every where, if we saw it any where;
152 we see nothing; but we enjoy every thing.

153 And thus is it set before us in the Old Testament, whether in prophecy or by occasional
154 anticipation. Isaiah prophesies that "it shall come to pass, that the Mountain of the
155 Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted
156 above the hills; and *all nations* shall flow into it." And it was shown by anticipation to
157 Jacob, and Elisha's servant; to Jacob when he saw in his dream "a ladder set upon the
158 earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the Angels of God ascending and
159 descending on it;" and to Elisha's servant when "the Lord opened the eyes of the young
160 man ... and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about
161 Elisha." [Is. ii. 2. Gen. xxviii. 12. 2 Kings vi. 17.] These were anticipations of what was to
162 be continually, when Christ came and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;"
163 and what that opening consisted in, St. Paul tells us—"Ye are come," he says, "unto
164 Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an
165 innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born
166 which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men
167 made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of
168 sprinkling." Such are the dwellers in our holy home; God Himself; Christ; the assembly
169 of the first-born, such as the Apostles; Angels; and the spirits of the just. This being the
170 case, no wonder the text actually speaks of the Church as heaven upon earth, saying
171 that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, ... and hath raised us up together, and
172 made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

173 What, then, the visible Temple was to the Jews, such and much more is the kingdom of
174 heaven to us; it is really a refuge and hiding-place as theirs was, and shuts out the
175 world. When men are distressed with anxiety, care, and disappointment, what do they?
176 they take refuge in their families; they surround themselves with the charities of
177 domestic life, and make for themselves an inner world, that their affections may have
178 something to rest on. Such was the gift which inspired men anticipated, and we enjoy in
179 the Christian Church. "*Hide me*," the Psalmist prays, "from the gathering together of the
180 froward, and from the insurrection of wicked doers." Again; "Keep me as the apple of an
181 eye; *hide* me under the shadow of Thy wings; from the ungodly that trouble me." Again;
182 "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth and receivest unto Thee; he shall dwell in
183 Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House, even of Thy Holy
184 Temple: Thou shalt show us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our
185 salvation." And again; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even
186 that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty
187 of the Lord, and to visit his Temple: for in the time of trouble He shall *hide* me in His
188 Tabernacle, yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He *hide* me, and set me up
189 upon a rock of stone." Again; "Thou art a place to *hide* me in, Thou shalt preserve me
190 from trouble." Once more; "O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for
191 them that fear Thee ... Thou shalt *hide* them privily *by Thine own presence* from the
192 provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them *secretly* in Thy tabernacle from the strife of
193 tongues. Thanks be to the Lord; for He hath showed me marvellous great kindness in a
194 strong city." And in like manner the Prophets; for instance, the Prophet Isaiah says,
195 "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a
196 man shall be as an *hiding-place* from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers
197 of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Again; "Thou
198 hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from
199 the storm, a shadow from the heat ... in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest."
200 "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the
201 gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in; Thou wilt keep
202 Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." And
203 again; "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness
204 quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation,
205 and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; when it shall hail, coming down on the
206 forest." With which agree many texts in the New Testament, such as St. Paul's words to
207 the Colossians, "Your life is *hid* with Christ in God." [Ps. lxiv.; xvii.; lxxv.; xxvii.; xxxii.; xxxi.
208 Isai. xxxii.; xxv.; xxvi.; Col. iii.]

209 Now what has been said, little as it is to what might be brought together on the subject,
210 may suffice to suggest to us that great privilege which we may enjoy, if we seek it, of
211 dwelling in a heavenly home in the midst of this turbulent world. The world is no
212 helpmeet for man, and a helpmeet he needs. No one, man nor woman, can stand
213 alone; we are so constituted by nature; and the world, instead of helping us, is an open
214 adversary. It but increases our solitariness. Elijah cried, "I, I only am left, and they seek
215 my life to take it away." [1 Kings xix. 10.] How did Almighty God answer him? By
216 graciously telling him that He had reserved to Himself a remnant of seven thousand true
217 believers. Such is the blessed truth which He brings home to us also. We may be full of

218 sorrows; there may be fightings without and fears within; we may be exposed to the
219 frowns, censure, or contempt of men; we may be shunned by them; or, to take the
220 lightest case, we may be (as we certainly shall be) wearied out by the unprofitableness
221 of this world, by its coldness, unfriendliness, distance, and dreariness; we shall need
222 something nearer to us. What is our resource? It is not in arm of man, in flesh and
223 blood, in voice of friend, or in pleasant countenance; it is that holy home which God has
224 given us in His Church; it is that everlasting City in which He has fixed His abode. It is
225 that Mount invisible where Angels are looking at us with their piercing eyes, and the
226 voices of the dead call us. "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world;" "If
227 God be for us, who can be against us?"

228 Great privilege indeed, if we did but realize its greatness! Man seeks the creature when
229 the world distresses him; let us seek the Creator; let us "seek the Lord and his strength,
230 seek His face evermore." Let us turn from the world, let us hide ourselves in His
231 dwelling-place, let us shroud ourselves from the earth, and disappear in the spiritual
232 kingdom of our God. Great benefit indeed beyond thought, thus to ally ourselves with
233 the upper creation of God instead of taking our portion with the lower! What can we
234 want more than this, whether to satisfy our real wants or our own feeling of them? Do
235 we need aid and comfort? Can any thing of this world impart such strength, as He who
236 is present in that Sanctuary which He has given us? Do we need images and ideas to
237 occupy our minds for encouragement and comfort, as intelligible companions, which we
238 may think of and dwell upon, and hold communion with, and be one with? What
239 fellowship can be more glorious, more satisfying than that which we may hold with those
240 inmates of the City of God whom St. Paul enumerates? Leave then this earthly scene,
241 O virgin soul, though most attractive and most winning; aim at a higher prize, a nobler
242 companionship. Enter into the tabernacle of God. "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of
243 the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ... He shall defend thee
244 under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers. Thou shalt not be afraid for
245 any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. Thou shalt go upon the lion and
246 adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet." Satan may do his
247 worst; he may afflict thee sore, he may wound thee, he may brand thee, he may cripple
248 thee, as regards *this* world; but he cannot touch thee in things spiritual; he has no power
249 over thee to bring thee into sin and God's displeasure. O virgin soul, let this be thy stay
250 in the dark day. When thou art sick of the world, to whom shouldst thou go? to none
251 short of Him who is the Heavenly Spouse of every faithful soul. Yield thyself to Him
252 freely and without guile. "He will bring thee to the banqueting house, and His banner
253 over thee shall be love. He will make thee to sit down under His shadow with great
254 delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to thy taste." Thou needest covet nothing on earth;
255 thou art full and aboundest; houses, and lands, and brethren, and parents, and wife,
256 and children, are more than made up by "the special gift of faith, more acceptable to thy
257 mind." [Wisd. iii. 14.] Though thou art in a body of flesh, a member of this world, thou
258 hast but to kneel down reverently in prayer, and thou art at once in the society of Saints
259 and Angels. Wherever thou art, thou canst, through God's incomprehensible mercy, in a
260 moment bring thyself into the midst of God's holy Church invisible, and receive secretly
261 that aid, the very thought of which is a present sensible blessing. Art thou afflicted? thou
262 canst pray; art thou merry? thou canst sing psalms. Art thou lonely? does the day run

263 heavily? fall on thy knees, and thy thoughts are at once relieved by the idea and by the
264 reality of thy unseen companions. Art thou tempted to sin? think steadily of those who
265 perchance witness thy doings from God's secret dwelling-place; hast thou lost friends?
266 realize them by faith; art thou slandered? thou hast the praise of Angels; art thou under
267 trial? thou hast their sympathy.

268 May thoughts like these, my brethren, sink deep into your hearts, and bring forth good
269 fruit in holiness and constancy of obedience. Whatever has been your past life, whether
270 (blessed be God) you have never trusted aught but God's sacred light within you, or
271 whether you have trusted the world and it has failed you, God's mercies in Christ are
272 here offered to you in full abundance. Come to Him for them; approach him in the way
273 He has appointed, and you shall find Him, as He has said, upon His Holy Hill of Zion.
274 Let not your past sins keep you from Him. Whatever they be, they cannot interfere with
275 His grace stored up for all who come to Him for it. If you have in past years neglected
276 Him, perchance you will have to suffer for it; but fear not; He will give you grace and
277 strength to bear such punishment as He may be pleased to inflict. Let not the thought of
278 His just severity keep you at a distance. He can make even pain pleasant to you.
279 Keeping from Him is not to escape from His power, only from His love. Surrender
280 yourselves to him in faith and holy fear. He is All-merciful, though All-righteous; and
281 though He is awful in His judgments, He is nevertheless more wonderfully pitiful, and of
282 tender compassion above our largest expectations; and in the case of all who humbly
283 seek him, He will in "wrath remember mercy.