

# Expatriates from the Kingdom of Heaven

For the last few years, I have, like so many seafarers, been living away from my home country, and this summer I returned home, back to the place I thought I knew.

But coming home is not easy, what I had remembered is not what I have found, attitudes have changed and many of the things I longed for while away are not quite as I had remembered. I walk down the streets of my own country and don't feel quite at home; instead I am longing for the things I found abroad, the friends in other countries, the customs I had got used to, and the food I had been eating. I find I am a stranger in my own country.

This is a very common experience for those of us who live and work in different countries and at sea. We find that, while being able to get along anywhere, we aren't really at home when we get home.

It is a strange experience, but I think it is one that teaches us much about what we are called to be as people of faith. Because if we are people who believe in God, then our hearts should be in God's kingdom; we should feel comfortable with how God does things, not how any country or culture operates.

We are expatriates from the Kingdom of Heaven, not really feeling at home anywhere but still able to fit in anywhere. As expatriates from God's Kingdom we are called to live lives that show God's love of the whole world, not just our countries of origin; to work for God's justice and peace, not the unquestioning expectations of our own cultures and backgrounds.

This is not comfortable as it means that we don't ever quite feel at home, but it also frees us to make a little bit of where we land more like Heaven. To make our places of work and our living spaces sanctuaries of peace and care for others, to make our hearts open to the wideness of the world, and the truth that we find good people in every culture and can encounter God in any land.

In short, we find that we are all called to be citizens of Heaven more than of any land, and so we never really feel at home, because we long for our real home, for Heaven.

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