

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). As future citizens of heaven, we have certain rights and responsibilities.

- We have the right to free housing. Jesus tells us, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be” (John 14:2-3).
- We have the responsibility to love our neighbor. Jesus is the just judge of heaven and earth and he has outlined the responsibilities that we bear as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me ... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:36, 40).
- We have the right to a share in God’s divinity. We receive a foretaste of the heavenly banquet when Jesus offers us his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in Holy Communion. In heaven, we will see God in all of his splendor, and we will live with him and all the citizens of heaven for eternity.
- In this life, we have the responsibility to approach Holy Communion free of every grave sin, properly confessed in the sacrament of reconciliation. We have a responsibility to believe in the Real Presence as we say amen when offered the precious Body and Blood of our Lord. In the life to come in heaven, we have the responsibility to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Thankfully, we may be purified in purgatory as we await the beatific vision.
- As future citizens of heaven and as children of God we have the right to be treated with respect. We are created in the image and likeness of God and this is the source of our dignity.
- We bear the responsibility of treating others with respect. Saint Peter urges us “be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Pt 3:8-9).
- We have the right to call God our Father, to call Jesus our brother, and to call Mary, the Mother of the Church, our Mother.
- We have the responsibility to recognize others as brothers and sisters regardless of nationality, worldly status, or gender. “Through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendant, heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26,28-29).
- We have the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These are gifts from God and there is no person or principality whom God has authorized to take those rights away from us.
- We have the responsibility to protect life from natural conception to natural death. With liberty, we have the responsibility to freely choose the good. Ultimately, we will not find the happiness we pursue ... unless we live a life of sacrifice following in the footsteps of Jesus who carried his cross to Calvary.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, in this way stand firm in all of your responsibilities to the Lord today ... that you may enjoy all of the rights of your citizenship in heaven ... in the life to come.