

# What kind of Church do we need to be?

Refreshing our vision of our calling

*Matthew  
Arnold –Dover  
Beach 1867*



*Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.*

*The Sea of Faith*

*Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.*

# 1 Peter 2.5, 9-12

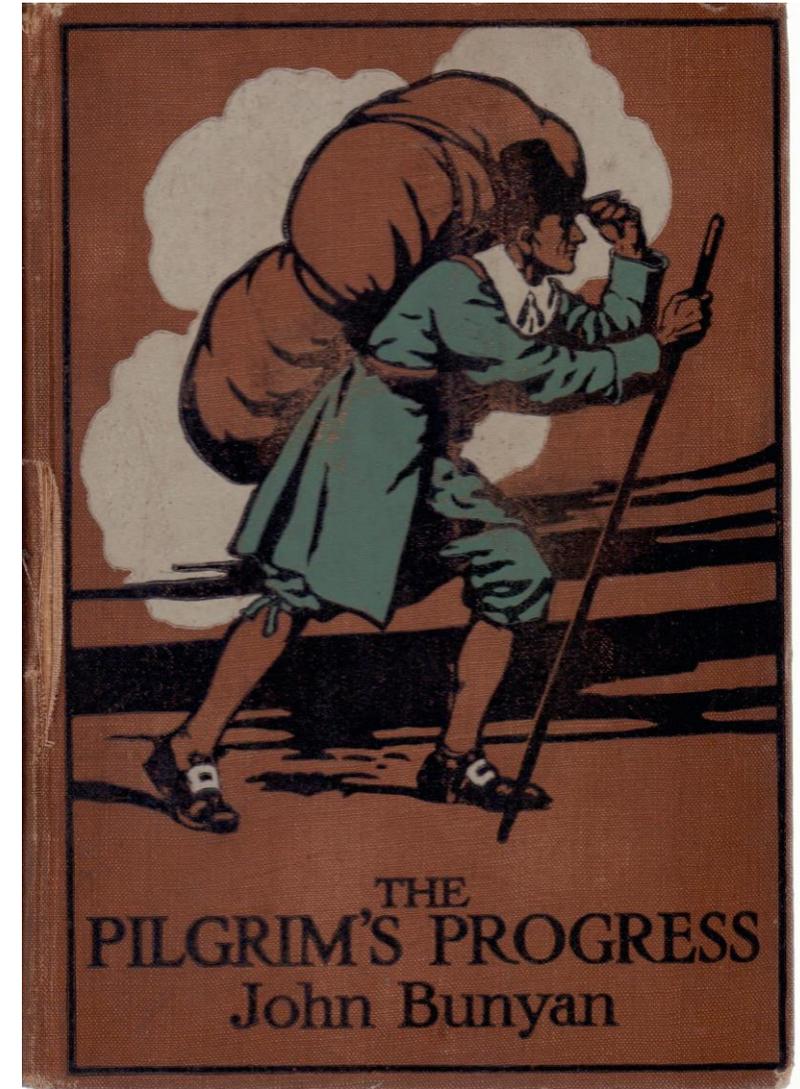
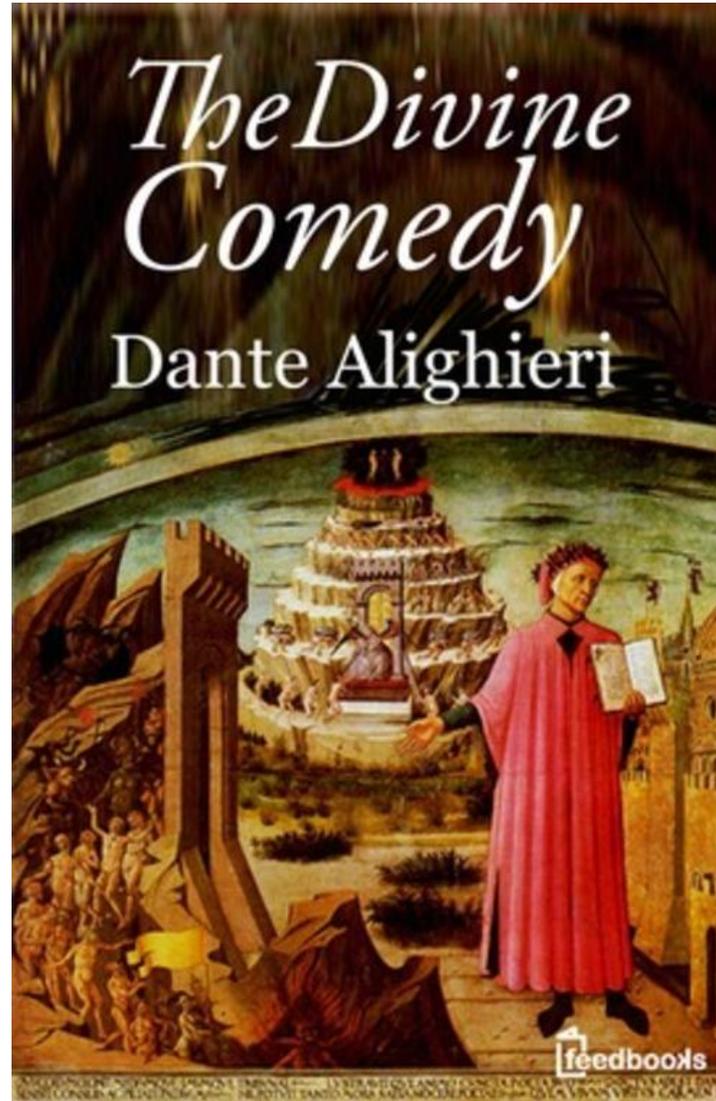
*You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.....*

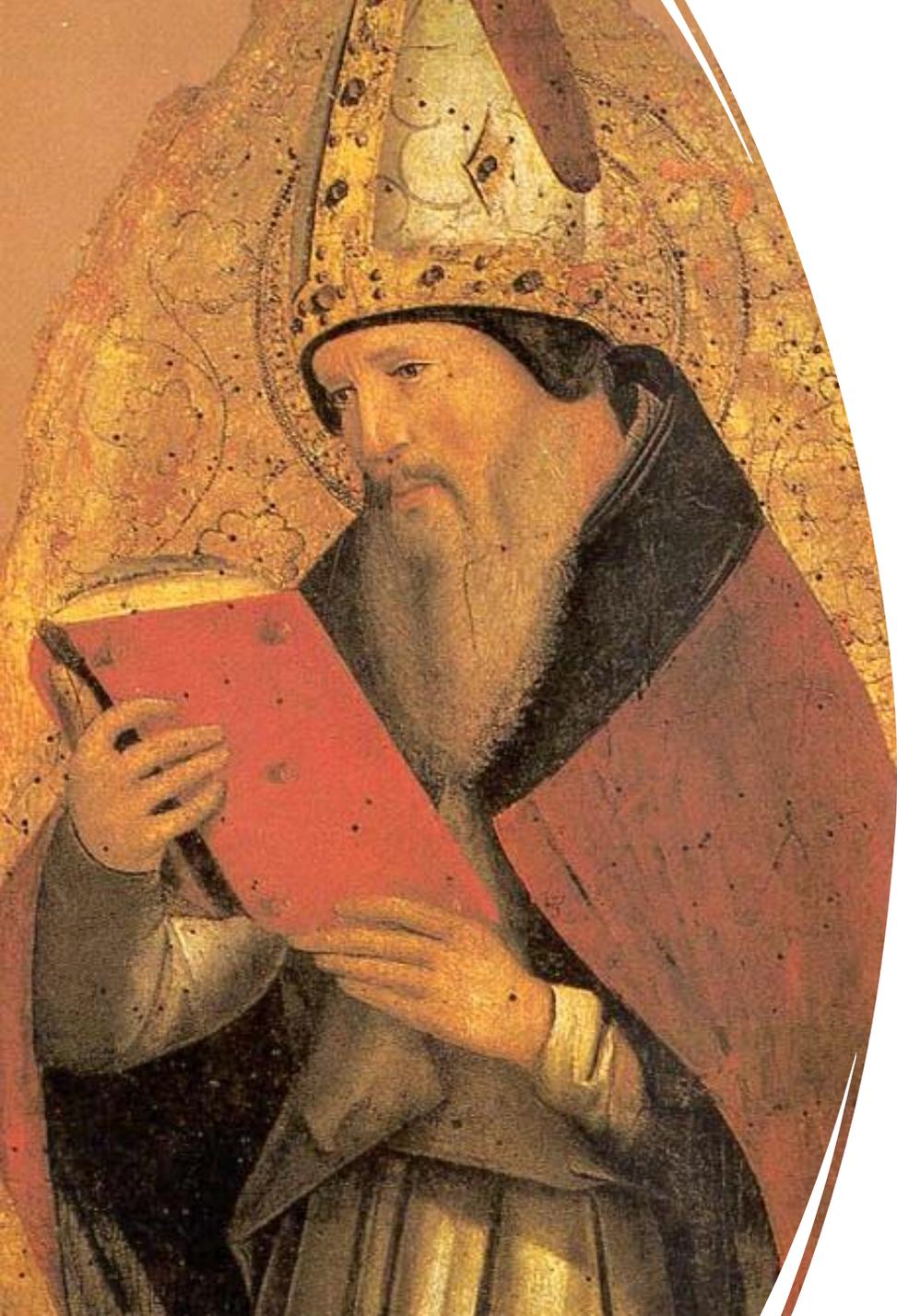
*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

# 1. A PILGRIM Church

*"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."*





“it is in hope that the City of God lives while it is a pilgrim here, begotten of faith in the Resurrection of Christ.” *Augustine, City of God xv.18*

“The heavenly city is a pilgrim in this world... both cities alike make use of the good things or are afflicted with the evils of this temporal state, but they do so with a different faith, a different hope, a different love, until they are separated by the final judgement, and each receives its own end to which there is no end. *Augustine, City of God, XIII.54*

## 2. A PRIESTLY Church



“the minority situation of the church is not first a problem but rather a privilege and calling. If I go to church as the only one from my street or my family, I do this also on behalf of my street or my family. To be a Christian at that moment means to be a priest on behalf of those who live in my neighbourhood, to offer sacrifices on behalf of the family. Parents go to represent their children, children to represent their parents, neighbours to represent each other.”

- Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society*, p213f.

## 2. A PRIESTLY Church

*"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....."*

*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession...."*

### 3. A PROPHETIC Church

- *...that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light....*

# A Prophetic Church



*"Faith refuses to accept the world as it is and insists on moving the world toward what it should be"*

Shane Claiborne

*"Live such good lives among the people that, though they don't understand you and speak against you, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he returns."*

*1 Peter 2.12*

### 3. A PROPHETIC Church

- *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

- Which of the three aspects of Church do you think is most important in our current cultural context?
- Which of the three comes more naturally to your particular church and parish?
- Which of the three is weakest in your context?
- Can you think of examples of what it might mean to be a pilgrim / priestly / prophetic church?
- What are the best examples you have seen of a truly prophetic church witness?