

We have a wonderful variety of people that come to this parish --- among them Lilly and Millie --- it could just as easily be Billy and Willy. About Lilly. She keeps a beautiful house ... everything shiny clean, polished and in its place. She has beautiful things – expensive, or in perfect taste, or with a treasured family history. She is OK with visitors, but not if they're going to break things or bring in dirt or cause disorder. Lily's emotional household, is similar. She likes people that are orderly, without too many problems ... and if they are neurotic they have the good manners to keep it hidden under a surface of good manners. Lily likes her world and her morality clear and orderly. There's little place for confusion or ambiguity.

And now about Millie. Her house is beautiful in a different way --- used, over-used and sometimes abused. Little kids teeth marks are on the legs of the table. People come and go all day; they feel so comfortable. Sometimes Millie would like more peace and order, but when push comes to shove, she wants a house that's lived in, comfortable and accommodating. And her emotional household. Millie likes order and clarity, but isn't offended or mad if someone gets weird or disorderly, arrives uninvited, brings problems to her protected life. Things aren't always so black and white, and sometimes she just thinks people do the best they can.

Lily and Millie both come to church here. You can guess what they're like. Lily wants parish life and the parish church beautiful, orderly and clean. You shouldn't have crying children when you need to hear the priest. You should have your own place in church, and not be asked to move over by rude people who come late. There shouldn't be someone sleeping in the back, or pan-handlers at the side, or someone all drunk praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament because he's half crazy with despair. If people can't respect the church, they shouldn't come. And the priests should be sinless, and the office never rude. And if that happens, her response isn't a correction but a reproach.

And Millie? Well, you know her....

God loves them both equally, Lily and Millie --- and has elements of both ... but also a preference. Yes, God is pure order and light (that's Lily)... but shows great tolerance for us with our lack of clarity and focus. The vision God gives Jeremiah of the pilgrim people is ... yes, the men in suits and the ladies in dresses ... but in the middle of the procession, the blind and the lame --- including the emotionally blind and lame. Later St. Paul says even the priests in this pilgrim people ... are messed up. They can deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, he says, for they themselves are beset by weakness. And in the Gospel, Lily may be telling Bartimaeus to stop the yelling and annoying, but Jesus says: No. Tell him come close.

Some parishioners just love this parish for its variety, and give and take, and deep human flavor and disorder. Thanks, Millie. Others make themselves come here, against their need for a perfect untroubled affluent world. Thanks, Lily. Everyone is welcome ... and needed ... to form this body for Christ. And it's for everyone's peace, and to respect everyone's need, that once a year we read off a brief list of suggested Manners in Church ... to promote respect ... to make our coming together more joyful. Here they are.

- try to arrive on time and stay for the whole Mass
- grow in respect for the building and sanctuary: genuflect, food, gum, quiet tone, cell phones, way of receiving communion (don't dip host or go to priest)
- participate with responses at mass: singing, etc. You are part of the experience.

Finally, the best we can, let's be grateful this parish and the great throng God is bringing to heaven. It's huge, its motley, it's colorful, it's awful, and in its way supremely beautiful. As someone famously said: The Catholic Church: here comes everybody.