

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Let Us See The Father

This request comes from my apostolic namesake in the Gospel, who I'm afraid seldom says anything very impressive there. What is the reason, though, for his being rebuked so promptly by Jesus?

Seeing The Father

What would Philip have wanted, what sort of *seeing* does he require? A theophany like that of Moses on Mount Sinai? Or some esoteric spiritualist vision? Jesus offers neither of these. He knows that the whole nature of his mission is to let people see the Father *in himself*. Knowing Jesus means knowing that in him God is made flesh, is made human. It is that realisation which fulfils the work he came to do; and that is why Thomas – the one who calls Jesus *My God* – brings the Gospel to its conclusion. The Crucifixion ended the time of receiving Jesus as a fellow-man; the Resurrection begins the time when we receive him as God and man. Now he is himself our way of seeing the Father.

Going To The Father

But he is more than a way of seeing; he is also a way of going. *I am the Way*, he says in today's Gospel; and if I understand this rightly, it means that his very presence in our lives makes us pilgrims to the Father. If you were in love with a great poet, your eyes would be constantly opened to that special, inspired way of seeing which characterises poets. If you couldn't share this, you wouldn't be able to love the poet; you would never really share her life. I can't imagine anyone who was indifferent to art loving Michelangelo; they might be obsessed with his odd nose, or captivated by his way of frying chips; but to say that they knew and loved him, but at the same time thought his works were just senseless blocks of rock, makes little sense. In the same mode, to say that we love Jesus Christ means that we are with him in the presence of the Father; he is our Way. It doesn't mean that *we keep his rules* or *we value his insights*. It is the whole Person of Jesus who becomes the Way we travel, the sum total of all we value, the heart of our living and breathing. That's what he came for, and if we don't give him that, or let him give that to us, then *we don't know him or what he is about*. The priority of Jesus in our field of vision is insisted on in the Synoptics: *anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. No-one can come to me without*

hating everything else and his own life too. Hot stuff: but it is the same as the claim in John: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No-one can come to the Father except through me*. I think the most powerful effect of this is to anchor us in the reality of our own life. We are not looking for a weird intervention, to roll back the present, and catch us up into a transformation-scene that wafts us to another world. Jesus asks for our faith that we are, in his presence, in the presence of the Father. The point about being alive is that it implies change, movement; When I say, *I'm alive*, that's what I mean. Now Jesus says: *I am your life*; and that means that his presence to me is to determine the way I go, the way I know the truth, the way I enter into life.

Communion With The Risen One

All of this points toward the mystery of the Eucharist, where Jesus is given to us here and now. No mystical flights, but our own hands holding the daily bread of our real life (*I am the true bread which comes down from heaven, so that you may eat it and not die*). The disciples knew him in the breaking of bread, and they knew that he had spoken to them a truth which transfigured the truth they had known (*that the Christ would suffer, and so enter into his glory*). They were turned round, they were sent back on their tracks, they re-possessed their life and hope, because they had known him in the breaking of the bread. Let Christ meet us there, to be our Way.
Fr Philip

