

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## The Sharp Edges

I'm a great believer in sharp knives in a kitchen. Cooking is to do with many processes: mixing, dissolving, scorching, wetting, drying, flavouring, heating and cooling. Much of it is about chopping, filleting, peeling, crushing, carving, and so on: tasks that are miserable without really sharp edges, and rather enjoyable with them. I have a perfectly weighted bread knife which effortlessly and accurately falls through the crustiest bread. It makes cutting bread a conscious daily pleasure. The electric knife and the food processor seem to me to be wonderful aids.

### Today's Gospel – Good News?

Today's Scripture begins with a prophet being put down the well to silence him, and in the Gospel there is a reek of burning, accompanied by the promise that the human household is about to be plunged into civil war. Disturbing talk; we must ask ourselves: *how can this be called Good News?* Jesus himself seems to be enthusiastic about the lighting of the fire; but hidden in the warfare is the story of his own Cross: *he came to the world he had made, and they did not know him: he came to his own people, and they rejected him.* In what sense can the dividing of the human family be good news?

### The Taking Apart Of Human Nature

Back in the kitchen, I have to acknowledge that the green-handled *couteau aux offices* with which I contentedly reduce fresh vegetables to strips and cubes is not good news for capsicums, whose beautiful bright forms are demolished forever. The rasped edge of the citrus-knife goes through the plum tomatoes, and their lifespan is instantly shortened. But all of this heralds the oncoming of *peperonata*, whose delicious southern aroma will shortly fill the whole house. What we see as the sharp blade of the Gospel carves swathes through the world and its loyalties is a similarly sacrificial process, taking apart relationships founded on the human limitations which are natural to us, and making room for new relationships ordered to the Kingdom of Heaven. No longer gorgeous peppers laid end to end in a cardboard crate, but peppers with thyme, tomato, red wine, olive oil, bay, basil. In one sense they have lost their nature; in another sense, they have turned into available food, have fulfilled their destiny, and have become delectable.

### Holocaust Or Harvest?

The series *World At War* dealt on Sunday with the Nazis' attempted destruction of the Jews. Every relationship was outraged, every impulse corrupted, in the cause of the maddened programme for Hitler's victory. When we read today's Gospel, we may fear that Christ is threatening a similar holocaust, the senseless waste of what little love the world has left. Our impulse is always to make the best of what we have, for fear that nothing better can be hoped-for. This is deeply pessimistic, and can be despairing. *Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will find it.* The classic Christian pattern, the Cross, has to be found in all things, if they are to survive that fire which Jesus is so eager to light, that baptism through which he has to pass. The holocaust is only apparent; it is truly the sacrifice of what must pass away, in order to give room to what must come in its place. We can't share the new world, until we have severed our bond with the old.

### We Need The Church

This is why we must begin to build a community drawing its life from the Resurrection, with its relationships brightly reflecting a new world. We can't be a polite club of nice people sharing their nice lives. We are a family of the baptised, upheld by the power of God, on fire with a Spirit the world cannot know. May we be all that He calls us to be.

*Fr Philip*