

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## The Feast Of God?

Every year we have this strange moment – Trinity Sunday - when we celebrate all that we *know* of the life of God.

### Late Have I Loved Thee

We automatically equate God with his actions, rather than contemplating his being. In this we are like babies, who cry for their mothers, but are really most anxious to be changed, washed, fed, and cuddled until they are asleep. What their mothers may want (for instance, to sleep themselves) has little or no influence over a baby (as most parents of babies discover). Indeed, a child's discovery of the feelings, motives, and burdens of his parents often comes *very* late in life, to his parents' surprise and dismay. Perhaps we could truly say (with Augustine) that our learning of God tends to come similarly late.

### Learning God's Life

In fact, this is not so bad. Because God gives us life so that we may learn him; and because *what he does* is exactly expressive of *who he is*, we can be confident that our experience of his actions (in making us, for instance) will be a reliable guide to knowing him; our ability to misunderstand is, of course, proverbial and perennial; but there is something about relationship which tends to correct mistakes, if only we will be faithful and persistent. It is so with parents and children; the only thing that can *perpetuate* misunderstanding between them is the refusal to meet and communicate. In the end, understanding is bound to break out if we keep trying: we share the same nature as our parents, we are organically and forever related to them; finally, failure to understand *them* is failure to understand *ourselves*. And if this is true of our earthly parents, then it is all the more true of God.

### Can We Understand God?

We can't understand God the way we get to know earthly facts and figures; but God is *personal*, and we ought to be fairly careful even about claiming that we understand another human being. God is, by nature, infinitely, greater than a human being; so much so that our human minds will always fall short of comprehensive knowledge of God. Yet we can't even have knowledge of other human beings until we admit that we have to *love* them to know them – maybe, even that we have to be loved *by them* before we truly know them. In the

world of persons, there is no human knowing that doesn't eventually cross the boundary into love. Anything less than that is just cold information, not worth calling knowledge.

### The Love Of God

If coming to know another human ends in love, all the more does our limited power to know God eventually find its true mode in love. Love is a power that belongs to God, and which he shares with his creatures. Of itself it tends to cancel human limitations: to raise the eyes, to lift up the heart, to open the mind, to release the powers of generosity, sympathy, community. There is a long tradition about love which mistakes these things. Lust, jealousy, compulsion and obsession are forms of imprisonment which often afflict and damage love. They are signs that our love has fallen into bad company. Our contemplation of God, which Christ has made possible for us, does not permit such paths. To know how Jesus is towards his Father, to share the Spirit that unites them, to share in the complex of relationship which we call the Holy Trinity, we must be caught up in the mind of Jesus as he journeys towards his Father, passing on the way that leads through all manner of human poverty, suffering, distortion. In his last hours he bore the tension we find unbearable, between the divine and the human. Our paschal pilgrimage leads us deep into the heart of the loving Three. This is true education, this is being led into the fulness of truth.  
*Fr Philip*