

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Are You The One?

This is the sort of question a lover might ask about the beloved, in that secret place deep inside the heart, where the most vital of all self-questioning is done. People often talk of the lover's proposal – the dramatic sinking onto one knee, the agonised “popping of the question”; but how much more vital is the asking – and answering – of the selfsame question in the silent places of the heart, before ever it troubles the airwaves of the open forum? I guess that most proposals of marriage have to have been well-considered *there* if they're to have much hope of acceptance. If this is true of an engagement between two earthlings, it is all the more true of an engagement between God and us.

### Do You Qualify For The Post?

Does a person in love ever dispassionately ask whether the one they love *qualifies* to be loved? I think not. *That* question is more asked by friends and relations of the lover. We who love Christ and bear his name don't ask whether he is “the One”. We have already decided that he is the whole meaning of our life, before we can work out any reasons. That's how it happened at first; the disciples *left everything and followed him* long before he asked them: *But you: who do you say I am?* The Church took three hundred years to compose the Creed we use today, and to say that Jesus of Nazareth is *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father*. The reasoning didn't ground the faith: rather the faith demands the reasoning.

### John the Baptist's Question

John is in prison and probably quite afraid. He knows Herod fears him and does not love him. He knows the adulterous Herodias, whom John denounced, will not rest while he draws breath. His contacting Jesus is thus no idle courtesy; he is sounding an alarm: *I'm in prison, I'm going to be killed: when are you going to bring forth the Kingdom of Heaven?* Jesus sends a message back to him, and the message calls for John's trust. Jesus assures him that he is busy giving the signs expected of the Messiah – the opening of blind eyes and deaf ears, the rehabilitation of crippled humanity, the raising of the dead, the proclamation of the Lord's favour: indeed, the news is good. This is the moment where John makes way for the Bridegroom, where he grows smaller, so that Jesus may grow greater; but in this

too he is the forerunner of the Messiah, who has also come to take the lowest place, by his death on the Cross. *Happy the man who does not lose faith in me!* That is a special word of encouragement for John.

### Let The Wasteland Rejoice And Bloom

The fact is that the joy of Christ does not lie in recognisable success or earthly victory, but in an unlikely flowering of the desert into which the Church must journey. Jesus trod that path alone in his passion and death. We must turn this wilderness into a triumphal way, making it alive with an anticipatory gladness, the happiness of those who live on divine promises. Because Christ has come, because *God has laid a precious cornerstone* in our human nature, we need never say that we have an irrational hope. *We have seen his glory*, and in that moment we fell in love with his humanity, lit from within by his identity with the Father: *the Father and I are one thing*. So the Fourth Gospel says: *we saw his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth*. Therefore the poor account we might once have given of our humanity has been totally rewritten: *the wasteland has bloomed* for us.

### Commanded Joy

There is no more gorgeous experience for us than the ability to make someone else thrill with joy. This is the utter happiness of a mother with a laughing child, or the lover returning after absence, or the rescuer who brings back the lost. It is a giving of life, which belongs above all to the Holy Spirit, who makes us able to enter with joy into the life of the Father and the Son. This is Christ's joy as he carries into the world the good news of the Father's love, the hope of eternity. He knows that he has the power to contradict the voice of death: if only the condemned prisoners will agree to listen to his voice.

I believe we should try to see our rôle in the same light. We have the good news to proclaim; it is humanity's entrance into eternal joy. We should deliver it with confidence.

*Fr Philip*