

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## It Is Time...Glorify Me!

It's hardly a surprise that a man who has spent his life proclaiming himself (*I am the true Bread from heaven, I am the true Shepherd, I am the Light of the World, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, I am the Resurrection, I am the Vine*) should end his life asking for the Glory of God to enwrap him.

### Extraordinary Language!

Indeed extraordinary, some said, *intolerable* language. What makes it difficult is that it could so easily be the outward sign of a huge delusion of grandeur. I am sure there is an *Oxford Book of Delusions* waiting for someone to write. It would include all the stupidities and self-deceptions of literature and of real life; and I dare say the reason why it hasn't yet been written is that we would all fear to figure largely in its pages. It comes hard for us, then, to believe in this undeluded man, who yet said such overwhelming things about himself, and who said, in effect, *Believe what I say about myself, or you will perish*.

### I Lay Down My Life

The fact that governs all the statements of Jesus about himself is the undoubted fact that he gave up his life. The Gospel insists upon this, pointing out that the disciples didn't understand it and were opposed to it; three times he is depicted assuring them, even when he appeared to be safe and enshrined in public favour, that he was on the way to crucifixion. This is hardly invented by the Evangelists or by the Church: it is not exactly a selling-point. He is so insistent on the certainty of his death that he is prepared to lose followers rather than consider any alternative fate. I've come to think, over this Easter, that there is a direct link between the tremendous claims he makes for himself, and the death he is going to die. If a man says, *I am the light of the world*, and then founds a University and installs himself as its first Vice-Chancellor, his motives may seem to be transparent. But if he claims to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life whilst insisting on going to an ignominious *death*, his motives remain mysterious. He does not appear to be profiting from his adherents in any way. But perhaps dying for the message is the sincerest way of underlining its truth, and the truthfulness of its herald. Jesus knew that, given the total surrender he was asking from people, he could keep nothing for himself. When the mystery he predicted with such firmness

is unfolding, he says: *Were I to seek my own glory, it would be no glory at all. My glory is conferred by the Father*. If we want to understand him, therefore, we must look to the Father as he did. That is where the prayer which makes up today's Gospel is so important for us.

### The Priestly Prayer

The priesthood of Jesus is that quality by which his whole being is given as a selfless sacrifice. It takes its nature from his eternal Sonship of the Father, in which he and the Father belong totally to each other. That is the truth about the Holy Trinity, the bond which lies at the heart of all existence. What happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth is all explained by this relationship. In Jesus we see that eternal belonging, translated into human terms, expressed in a human life-story. The translation is perfect, the expression exact. It is as if, in this priestly prayer, John gives us a window into the mind of Christ. When Jesus rejoices that we have accepted that he came from God, he doesn't just mean that he was sent from God's side into the world, but that every word, every action of his comes from the Father too. This is what we have come to realise, it is in this that we have believed. The stupendous claims he makes for them are thus entirely justified, and do not in the slightest way proceed from any ambition or self-aggrandizement. Jesus' deeds are the deeds of God, and his words are God's word.  
*Fr Philip*