

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

CHRISTUS RESURREXIT, ALLELUIA!

How naff our translation of the Bible sometimes is! You get to be aware when it's making a boob. I read the first line of the epistle reading at the Easter vigil. It says: *You have been brought back to true life with Christ*. This implies that you were, once upon a time, living true life, and then not, and have now returned to this former happy state. Like discovering elastic stockings or a remedy for piles. I look up the Greek, and I find: *If you were co-raised with Christ, seek things above, where Christ is, sitting at the Father's right hand*. It says nothing about turning the clock back, or regressing to a former state. That would be quite inimical to the meaning of the resurrection. Jesus himself does not reverse out of the situation of the tomb. Rather he makes it the gateway into a previously unknown Way which leads to life as we have never known it. His finding this Way for us does not rest on a backing-out, but on a forging-ahead into new territory. *We are made new*.

We Are Made New

This newness is thorough-going and limitless. Nothing short of a new creation...and our language about it must avoid any compromise. There's quite enough about us that is despairing, mean, and minimalist. We love to think the worst, we love to cheese up, "measuring out our life in coffee-spoons"; we do as little as we can get away with. It is to contradict all this gloom that Easter dawns, with an overwhelming blast of solar power which scatters the darkness and its forces. We are not onlookers, or wishful thinkers, thinking of happiness with that nostalgic depression so typical of good people in the real world. We are the place where the miracle happens – *the Resurrection: a heart's-clarion!* as the poet says. It is for you that Christ enters the world, for you that he teaches and gathers the Church, for you that he reaches out to heal, that he lets himself be captured, condemned, and crucified. You cannot refuse to be moved to the heart, or to let the power of this dawning shine for others, and not for you. The opening of the heart would be a small thing, if the heart were sound and alive and free. But the human heart is a sealed tomb, and its happiness lies beyond an entry we

dare not make, and can only make alone. Jesus too entered the tomb alone, and lay there powerless, having emptied his life out to the Father. That is where the fullness of the divine love surged into the tomb of humanity, and lifted up the creation God will never abandon, and raised it to his right hand, and into glory. These things are not ours to dream up or to engineer or deserve or acquire. They are gifts of divine grace, they are *the things that are above* of which Paul says we must think.

Looking Back

It is from the far side of the gulf between death and life that we can begin to look backwards, and see in the light of Easter the things which used to terrify us and weigh us downwards. This process of looking back is characteristic of the truly convalescent, those who are being healed. If you look for it in the Scriptures of Easter you will find it in abundance. Mary of Magdala *turned* at the voice of the Risen One. The disciples of the road to Emmaus found themselves taken back to re-read the Scriptures, and found there a frame of reference for what they had experienced in the Passion. They found that their encounter with Christ didn't just make their hearts burn in the present, or even in the present and for the future. They found their *past* illuminated as well – as if the tremendous experience they knew at Easter completely renovated the past. This is why we speak of the Easter experience as *rebirth*, as a new creation. With God, all is possible. With God, we are reborn. It is the coming-home to us of hope, resting not on our emotions, but on God's deeds. However you feel, therefore, I wish you Easter joy.

Fr Philip