

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

If He Could Only Speak!

This is something of a refrain to human experience. We have lots of words for good things in Christianity; few rank higher than *communication* – which is the activity that results in *communion*; and that is our final aim in life – to enjoy total communion with God, and with all others in God.

Creation

When God creates in Genesis 1, he does it by an act of communication – by his Word. When the New Testament wants to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, it says: *the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. So if you want to know what God is like, you need to think of *One Who Speaks His Word* – in short, God is The Communicator: and because *the Word is God*, we can say: *God is Communication*. In communicating, God creates; in creating, he communicates.

A Sacrament

We too are privileged to be communicators – with one another, and with God. When God communicates with us, we become co-creators, because wherever God speaks, life springs into being. And because God has made us sharers in his grace, we can bring one another to life by communicating with each other. We can speak to one another the Word who is life. This is a sacramental reality, in which we make one another holy. There are always *words* when the sacraments are celebrated; we need to take care of these words, and be sure they are the best we can manage, the most open to the presence of God. But the sacraments are *deeds* also, like the silent laying-on of hands when the sick are anointed, or the eloquent pouring of water and oil at baptism, or the breaking and sharing of bread and cup at the Eucharist. In marriage the deeds are all about communication, and in the greatest of these God has set the generation of human life itself, the bringing of new people to the banquet of life, which is our greatest sharing in co-creation. This tremendous, deep bond between God and human communication seems limitless. Without doubt the early Church was right to see itself as a herald, a messenger to the world; but this doesn't always mean a soapbox or a pulpit, or a

congregation. *Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst*. In our families and friendships, the Word of God makes himself heard, and life becomes abundant.

Deaf And Speechless

What is a life that cannot hear or speak? I trust the Spirit to enter it. But what is a life that *will not* hear or speak? The refusal to listen or communicate can be the deep rejection of God, whose voice resounds in all Creation, and in our very being. Think of the countless lives that have retreated into silence, closed to the music of the spheres, the cry of the suffering world, or even the simple words of a neighbour. So many people cease to listen any longer to catch a word that is personal and life-giving. The endless jabber of radio and television replaces human contact and involvement, excludes the chance of real communion. And what if the Church should forget its great task, of giving the Good News to the world? *The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor: to calm the broken-hearted: to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to the imprisoned: to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord and a day of vengeance from God: to comfort all who mourn and to give them, for ashes, a garland: for mourning-ropes, the anointing with gladness: for despondency, festal clothing*. This is the lovely, sacramental vocation which makes us the Church; and the deaf and dumb man in the Decapolis, who meets Jesus, is being helped to put on his robe of gladness in the miraculous story we read today. I wonder whether the Diocesan Assembly can help to do that for our Diocese. I'm not sure. But I know a man who can. *Fr Philip*