

THE VERY BACK OF THE BULLETIN

End Of An Era

This Sunday marks the end of an era for *The Back of the Bulletin*, its author, and its readers (if any yet survive). I remember the day when I migrated from Melbourne and Castle Donington to Wollaton and the University. It was a difficult time. We'd watched the new church in Castle Donington rising from the site of the old, and it was within two weeks of being handed over. My successor, Canon Anthony Dolan, inherited the church (and a debt which I feel sure is still being paid off). The house in Wollaton was in quite a mess, having been uninhabited for some time. A squad of parishioners turned out to fettle it up, and in time it grew to be a very calm and quiet place to come home to after days spent in the University.

Parish Priests

Having a resident parish priest has its advantages. He gets to know people better than a visiting priest, and vice-versa; he's always on hand. But it isn't an unmixed blessing, as doing the many little jobs he does makes the community feel more involved, and more responsible for what happens (or doesn't). I'm sure that sense of collaboration will return and increase in the new situation, and it will surely be "a time of gifts". I recommend that you read the two letters of St Paul to the Corinthians as a resource. You are a gifted community, as they were, and the same strictures apply as the ones Paul explained to them: gifts are only gifts if they are truly given: without strings, selflessly, and with no spirit of domination. I think you will come to see the presence and the gifts of your holy deacon in a new light in the months ahead.

New Priests

Listening to the same voice for eleven years has been uniquely demanding on your patience and endurance. If pupils in school had to do it, there'd be war. Of course, my new parishioners will probably be glaring at me for not being Canon Turner, and I dare say there may be moments when I go into a decline because *they* are not *you*! It's a very ticklish time for everyone, so let's not be surprised if it feels bleak or unhappy as the new situation settles down. The old Latin

phrase, *Ecclesia supplet* – the Church supplies – will come true. When something is lost, the Church grows to supply the want of it. This experience is a direct display of the work of the Holy Spirit, so we must be on the lookout for its happening amongst us.

Eleven Years of Losses And Gains

I'd lived in small parishes before, but never looked after a University. To me that was a revelation, and surprisingly I've enjoyed it. I'll have a little University in Lincoln, but quite unlike the august Russell Group establishment at Nottingham. I have met many lovable people, baptised some, buried others, and learned a lot. I'd never spent a night in hospital until I came here, and this too taught me a great deal about health, illness, the Church, and my own faith. The death of my mother came towards the end of these years, and I shan't forget the kindness and courage so many people shared at that time. The leaving of ministry like these is like a little death, and while it's never easy to die even a bit, it's part of our human condition, and it must be brought to its proper place as a facet of the Paschal mystery, whereby Christ makes us new. I thank you from the heart for all your undeserved, unrewarded kindness to me – another jewel in your crown – and apologise and ask pardon for all my failings and derelictions. My punishment for them is to be sent to a lonely existence in a massive, grim, scruffy, thunderous old house on the main traffic intersection of Lincoln, which is never quiet and never free from traffic fumes. I shall be spending some time on the necessary task of relocating the parish priest's residence – and looking for *this* parish priest's new home. *Fr Philip*