

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

The End Of The Way

St Luke stresses the pilgrimage of Jesus to Jerusalem as his determined path, from which he won't let himself be diverted. When someone is really determined to take a path, the rest of us all ask whether it's a good idea. Is it well thought-out, well-advised? Has everything been taken into account and properly weighed? How can the aim in view best be accomplished - is there some way that is cheaper, quicker, easier?

“Get Behind Me, Satan!”

Such talk is not for Jesus of Nazareth. There is, to my mind, not a single moment in the whole Gospel tradition where he is seen taking advice from any human person about his aim, his future, his ultimate meaning. Even at the beginning of the Gospel, discussing with the Doctors in the Temple, he is not asking questions: they are “amazed at his understanding, and his *replies*”! We know from the same story that he is not restricted in his wisdom by his parents, who “did not understand what he meant”; although he went home and was subject to them, they already knew that there was something in him they hadn't put there, and Mary almost certainly told the washhouse in Nazareth that they had a bit of a handful. There comes a moment in all the Gospels where he tells his friends about the Way he must go, and they are horrified. He is amazingly sharp with them in reply, calling Peter *Satan* for suggesting some other way.

Moses And Elijah

In the story of the Transfiguration Jesus is shown “speaking of his Exodus, that he would accomplish in Jerusalem”: but his interlocutors are the mighty figures of the Jewish Bible, Moses and Elijah. Their discourse isn't reported, and we assume it would be beyond our understanding, just as the Twelve could make nothing of it. The truth is, that Jesus is not like a man who is weighing his life by human wisdom or by common-sense. *He is like a man in love*. When we are in love, we cannot bear to be separated from the Beloved, and we can listen to no talk about good sense or proportion. We know in the marrow of our bones that whatever is hardest, highest, and most generous is the way forward. If we can imagine anything that is costlier or more sacrificial, then that will take the place of earlier and more temperate plans. The worst

thing you can say to someone “madly” in love is “Slow down - be sensible!” The invitation to moderate the passion which has possessed us is like petrol on the flames - stand back!

Jesu, Lover Of My Soul

There is a lot to be learned from this idea of Jesus; because clearly he is not hot-headed or rash, and the fire that is in him is white heat rather than anarchy. The idea of laying down his life comes to him as a direct necessity; he sees it clearly, and he agrees to respond. How can it have appeared to him? Jesus wants to pass on to people the good news, that they are to be at one with the Father. He sees the same need, whether as pain, loneliness, hunger, disability or death. He knows God, and he knows the lack of God in people's lives. He sees their pain simply as so many different modes of the need for God. Such is his love for human beings: and, we can assume, his love for each of us. That is the bridge-building mission, undertaken out of the divine love that belongs to him as Son of the Father, the love that descended on him in his Baptism. Look no further for the indomitable passion which cannot be stayed by any human motive: “The way you think is human, not divine!” Divine love in a human being; think of it! The Old Testament always knew that it was fatal for a human to look on God. We might say that simply living as a man was fatal to the Son of God.

“You Have Heard The Blasphemy....

....what is your verdict?” They answered: “He deserves to die.” They thought they were cursing him, bringing him to an “untimely” end; in fact they were co-operating with the plan of God, and the timing was perfect. How strange, that Jesus and Caiaphas agreed so perfectly with each other, that he should die so that the people might be saved, and Peter and the disciples, the people who loved him most, didn't see it at all. During his life he always picked up sinners and outlaws, and in his dying it is the same. The priests mock him and Pilate gives him a cynical title; but the criminal who hangs beside him knows he will inherit a kingdom. How did such a man work out that this place of execution was the scene of a coronation, that Jesus and he had come together at the end of the Way? No-one else had this insight in Luke's account. But the criminal knew that Jesus loved him, and went home at rights with God. *Fr Philip*