

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Too Much For You Now

When I was little the doctrine of the Trinity was always declared to be a mystery, which seemed to suggest that you couldn't understand it. I think they said that to stop people asking what it meant, because the teachers were wary of trying to explain.

### Grades of Understanding

Understanding is such a complicated thing, with so many different meanings. We use it of technical grasp, like understanding how to change a washer or how to diagnose an illness. Those things are fairly easy to understand if you have the training. Indeed, understanding things that are smaller than we are ourselves can be more or less complete. But talk about understanding another person, and you're speaking of a different level of comprehension. We need sympathy - the ability to share another's pain or happiness, the imagination of what it's like to be this person who is not me, and may not be like me. Few of us would dare to claim that our understanding of any other person was complete, that they had lost to capacity to surprise us. Even if they are in some sense our equals, other people are always beyond our ability to predict. It's when I'm trying to understand another person that I reach the limits of my ability to understand.

### Understanding God?

When you come to think of God, there is no longer any question of equality. We say that we are created in God's image and likeness, but that does not mean that God is like a human; we can think of a great artist making a statue that is like a woman; but that would not mean the woman was in any real sense like the statue! So we resemble our Maker *insofar as a creature can*; but he surpasses us and transcends us to the point where we can say: our understanding will never comprehend him, he will always be beyond us. That means that the heart of all being is indeed mysterious, and that's great news. I think it would be a universe of only limited interest if someone like me could exhaust its meaning. I need God to be God, I need the world to have a greater meaning than I would have given it.

### Wisdom

In the mind of God is the fountain of wisdom, which is the inner intention of God as he

creates the world. Because he is God, his creation perfectly expresses his wisdom, which is always present in the coming into existence of what is new. I suppose we might say that human understanding is at its highest when we share in the wisdom of the Creator. I feel sure that parents' sharing in the creation of a new human being are experiencing the working of wisdom. And here we approach the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus told us that the heart of God is *not* a sort of gigantic monolith, but a relationship - in fact, a sort of super-creative *family*. From this Trinity flows the massive torrent of creation, varied, bright, and ever-evolving. In some sense everything that comes into being is chosen in Christ, as if he had become a catalogue, a marvellous pattern-book of ever-changing possibilities, of some of whom God says: *Let it be*. And it springs to life, giving to the world yet another image of God, unique, transient, and precious. It is no wonder that those privileged to share in this act of creation should do so in ecstasy.

### Beyond Words

The inner life of God, however, is not beyond human ken, because Jesus of Nazareth, who walked on the same earth that we inhabit, is the Son of God. His deeds display the nature of God in a way which we have never been able to forget, and in which we never cease to find new depths of meaning. He is like a door into the unseen God, and in him we contemplate a kind of humanity which belongs utterly to God and which is utterly at peace with God. He gathered people who were damaged, possessed, crippled, and separated from themselves and from others, and taught them their path to new life. His touch brought new birth to them. He loved them because they knew their need. Surely we can come to be amongst them, seeing how needy we are of the Wisdom in which we were called into being. When we have heard this eternal Word which explains all, heals all, and unifies all, we shall be filled with the Spirit, and raised up into the community of Father, Son, and Spirit, to enjoy the ecstatic life which is theirs. It is clear that between them there is the same outpouring of self-giving that we have sometimes glimpsed in our human relationships, and in which we know our deepest wisdom. May God bring us there, and welcome us.

*Fr Philip*