

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

True Bread or Junk Food?

What a choice! But it comes to us in various areas, not just at the grocer's. I'd like to offer you two of them: the making of friends, and the search for beauty.

Staying At Home

It's a quaint fact that these days vast numbers of young people live at home through their twenties, as if they can see nowhere else they want to go (or can find nowhere else so comfortable). Sometimes parents connive at this hotel living, faithfully continuing to provide food, heat, light, cleaning and laundry services, pay the TV license and the home insurance, and sustain the lives of their giant chickens into their middle age. The old joke about the irreplaceable way mother made Yorkshire Pudding has become a way of life!

Friendship

Obedience to parents is essential for children, but not, I think, a virtue in later life. Adult children not only achieve equality with their parents, but actually take on the protective and nutritive rôles in return, as parents lose their independence and grow to need help. I think friendship is the area where we most take hold of our own lives ("you can *choose* your friends!") and find our proper independence. The Bible is eloquent about the precious treasure of a true friendship. We only have a few in our lives, but how vital they can be: what a source of trust and trustworthiness! Maybe an unmarried person (like a priest) can see depths in friendship sometimes outshone by the married relationship: but such depths are still there for married people too, and the vital gifts which friends offer each other are just as important for wives and husbands. Now I sometimes meet people who seem to have practically no experience of real friendship. To me this looks like an ultimate form of poverty. To grow up without friends is a terrible experience, and leaves you with a bleak view of the world; we know we've got to make our own way, leaving father and mother behind; but the world can look immensely lonely and

indifferent without the love and respect which a friend can offer. Without this generous intimacy, life can become very poor. When I think of people living alone, meeting few friends, I think I am looking at a great modern form of poverty. Life should not be lived like that: *it is not good for us to be alone.*

Beauty

is in the eye of the beholder: yes, but not only there. It's in things and places and people before anyone looks at them. Like the choice of a true friend, the quest for beauty needs a sort of apprenticeship. So much in our culture is false, substitute stuff instead of the real thing. We want to find the world abundant and generous, and this makes us want beauty to be cheap and common. So we have ravaged our cities and countryside comprehensively, assuming that cheap solutions and charmless architecture can be absorbed into the city and made acceptable. Contemplating Lincoln Bus Station or the even lovelier Police Station, or the wretched office blocks on Silver-st and Clasket-gate, is an object-lesson in the haplessness of town planners. Do they think the Cathedral alone can make Lincoln graceful, in the teeth of this modern banality? It is hard to complain that the streets are awash with litter and the people unsafe at night, when ugliness on such a scale is allowed. Our city's forms should constantly inspire the sort of life we believe in. Our homes too should be calm and beautiful, not vulgar, unquiet, and ostentatious. Our chosen surroundings affect our lives. I believe that beauty, like friendship, is a quality that can be taught, and caught. My lovely grandparents possessed a rare sense of beauty and style. She scrubbed steps in her youth, and was determined to make a good family in a beautiful home. He was a joiner, and in the depression of the '30s often out of work. They never had a great deal of money. But I shall always remember their faultless taste and measure, as my earliest memory of beauty. It isn't a "snob" value, but a form of love for things in their simplicity, in good order and in their right

place.. How can we learn to love beauty?

Fr Philip