

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Give It - All You've Got!

You know that the loveliest experience in the world is the free gift you receive from someone else. You might also reflect that there's nothing in the world so objectionable as ungenerosity.

Turning To Ashes

The fact is that the most beautiful, gifted, and desirable of people can come to excite the deepest loathing, if they show themselves to be incapable of generosity. All their show of glamour and talent turns to ashes without the irreplaceable quality of kindness, of readiness to give and to share. It gives us almost intolerable bad news when our tenderest love is greeted with indifference and distaste. When we are young, and wearing our hearts on our sleeves, we are probably resilient enough to bear the bash on the nose which is delivered by our first love. We are still supple enough to learn, and to sustain the lesson that the love of others has to be deserved, not on our terms, but on theirs. It comes harder later in life, and many a fine poem has been written by a wise but rejected lover.

Life Is Short

One of the wisest lessons these poems teach is that one can become much too choosy about other people. Life doesn't last long, and the impatience of the young has about it a certain beauty, even wisdom. We older people get used to compromise and to resignation, which pass for wisdom. We let our opportunities pass us by, we accept the loss of what is precious and dangerous, settling for what is safe, mediocre, and at last tasteless. We try to welcome what is average. Well, one of the words for average is *mean*, and meanness lies behind this poor choice. Behind this meanness lies a failure of faith. Let me spell this out.

Generosity - Faith At Work

If you, like the wretched man with only one talent, decide to cling to what you have and avoid the fearsome venture of belonging to others, your house will be left to you. But it won't be a shining or warm house. This will be because you don't believe in God, who is the Creator who brings beauty out of nothing, who fills the starving with good things, who will always see that you have plenty of things to share. *Happy the poor in spirit* is a special

encouragement for us to break out the best things for the person who needs them, to empty the larder for someone who's hungry, to make the poor our brothers and sisters, to be eager to treat them with equality, to love them as ourselves. *If you feed only your friends, what merit can you claim?* The words are Christ's words. If you believe in him, you need to do as he does.

The Cross As A Gift

All the generosity of Jesus - the healer, the teacher, the host, and the friend - is there to set the scene for his ultimate act of love, the Cross itself. The worst thing we can meditate on about the Cross is its loneliness - which St Mark makes so extreme in the first of the Gospels. All his friends abandon him to a death where only ridicule and abuse ring in his ears. There, at the end of the world, is the moment where God makes himself one with all the rejected people of the earth, all those whose self-gift is hurled in the mud to be trampled. How could this be a gift, when no-one is there to receive it?

Father, Into Your Hands

It is Luke who supplies the words from the Psalms which reveals the heart of the mystery. Jesus does not rely on any earthly response as he gathers his life together and lays it down. A bride and a bridegroom prepare for the wedding-day like this, careful to include all they can find to bless and to deliver into the care of the one they love. Jesus does exactly this, and he does it for his Father, knowing that his total gift of himself to the Father is already at the heart of being, beyond the labouring universe and the cruel earth where love is rejected. With great sorrow and pain, Jesus the Man does the deed of Christ the Son of God, and delivers himself into the hands of the Father. In that moment, the darkened earth is suddenly illuminated with the incarnation of God's love, and the way is open for divine generosity to live in human flesh.

Open The Doors To The Redeemer

If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon. Isaiah said

it. Jesus has done it. Have we the courage to
walk the same path?

Fr Philip