

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

The Word Becomes Flesh

Which is more real: a word, or a deed? St James has a good deal to say about this. He says: *Prove to me you have faith, without having any good works to show!* Every Sunday we say *I believe in one God*; St James would have us prove that by having some deeds to show, of a kind that could only be done by a believer. But think on!

God Spoke; And It Was So

There is one who speaks, and reality follows immediately. God said, *Let there be light*, and there *was* light! So powerful is the word of God, that what he says is already a fact. Surely we can say of this creating power, that the Word of God is more powerful than the facts it brings into being. Perhaps we could go further, and say that human beings who keep the promises they make share in this divine power: we say of them that *they keep their word*, and their word is as good as the deed. When we live faithful lives, keeping our word and delivering what we say we shall, we bring our human world into alignment with the reign of God; the kingdom comes on earth, as it is in heaven.

God Helps Us To Promise....

When people make big promises - like the ones at a wedding, or the ones at a Baptism - they are surely acting under the direct influence of God. God is the love that makes people want to give themselves to each other, to be faithful to each other as wife or husband, father or mother. Deacons and priests make their promises in the same way, for the good of the church. It won't do for us to watch a wedding, or a baptism, or an ordination, and say: *I'll believe it when I see it!* because God is already involved, at work in the lives of those who make generous and costly promises. They are doing the business we're created for: they're laying down their lives for each other. When we are born into the world, that is our great destiny: we are born to lay down our life in love for others. This makes the *promising* moment, when it comes, into the defining moment of our whole experience - the one, paradoxically,

which makes us who we are. We aren't china dolls, whose destiny is to sit in a china cabinet and look charming. We are created to love others, and to express that love in a promise that we *mean* to keep, and *do* keep. This ensures that our gift of self is something more than a selfish impulse-of-the-moment reality: it's a true commitment based on something outside ourselves, reaching beyond present circumstances into a future we don't yet know.

...And God Helps Us Keep Our Promises

How often I've seen those promises carried forward faithfully into the unknown: out of better, into worse: out of richer, into poorer: out of health, into sickness. Now which means more: the deeds of the years, done at last almost as a matter of habit: or the promise that began them, which has presided over each day, every year, moulding a life-story of industrious faithfulness, hard-working love - never turning back for sorrow or sin or dark times, revealing its meaning with every hurdle and challenge it overcomes? Words like that are real words, they are the Word becoming flesh *because they have the power of God in them*. It's a sad generation that loses the power or the desire to make such promises. It is a surly and slapdash business, to live on our impulses, to say that promises like that are "only words". I don't believe we have anything to offer one another more precious than heartfelt promises that defy the unknown future, and vow to cling to truth and love, come what may! If ever we men and women look a little like God, it is surely then. We are giving out of our skins, and showing our divine destiny.

We Saw His Glory

Once you have understood the truth about Jesus, that he was living from a divine store of openness and generosity that made him a benefactor to every poor, sick, isolated, or dishonoured creature, it helps you to see your fellow-humans with new eyes. He gives us the power to become children of God, full of grace, and truth.

Fr Philip