

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Make Your Home

If I had a sinister desire to subdue a whole population to my evil will, I would convince them that their tuppenny-ha'penny houses were worth a quarter of a million pounds, bung them into debt for life, and make them work to pay it off at exorbitant rates of interest. If any of them showed signs of intelligence or independent thought, I'd charge them another twenty thousand for a degree, and make them work to pay that off too. I wonder who's doing that to us? Our little houses can't be worth much more than a couple of thousand pounds in terms of bricks/tubes/wires/plaster and hardboard; yet we have to go into debt for life to deserve one, and of course it is in our interest to keep the price rising, otherwise we lose our own investment. Meanwhile, the streets of our city are filling to overflowing with otherwise empty shops full of photographs of houses, where people who seem to me complete drones pretend to sell them (in fact you still have to pay a surveyor - and of course one of m'learned friends - to do the real business).

### What Is The Real Business?

But the tide of telly talk about moving house, makeovers and DIY has really nothing at all to do with home-making. I find in the words "New Homes" on the estate-agency wall yet another fib. You can buy a *house* if you're rich enough; but no-one can buy a home. A home is about peace, tranquillity, rest: it is a place where our lives can flourish freely, finding all that they need to be fulfilled. How do we go about making a place like that? (Answers please, on a postcard, to the Rectory, 34 Broadgate.) The fast way, I believe, is to find someone who loves you, and whom you love, and set up in the same house. Then all that you need will be shared, and become the bricks and mortar of a home - not of a house. If that place is safe enough for you to open your whole heart, and share your whole life and all your feelings, good and iffy, then you can hope to find a place of rest and welcome, where you can be yourself without being punished for it, and the atmosphere can help your personality to

unfold, and be the best you can be, generously learning the mystery of laying down your life. It's nice if that happens to be a comfortable and congenial place: but it can all happen in a chaotically messy place, loud with children's games and cheerfully barking dogs, draped with drying washing and splashy paintings. If the heart is sound, the other things matter less and less; and if the heart is sick, no amount of upholstery is going to comfort it.

### Make Your Home In Me

The invitation of Jesus is that we should build *in him* our true home. *My true love hath my heart, and I have his: by just exchange, one for another given. I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss: there never was a better bargain driven.* I included these words of Sir Philip Sidney, a bright star of Elizabethan poetry, in my anthology for the Roman Breviary in English, published in 1974. I hope that many priests, sisters and layfolk will have read it, and realised that it is a startling prayer to Christ. When you have experienced the fountain of life that is a shared love, you will know what Jesus means in saying *Make your home in me.*

### Entering The Paschal Joy

In Eastertide I think these words have a special beauty; we reverently read the Easter stories, where the Crucified One returns to his shattered friends, and rebuilds their hearts in a new and eternal love that will never be lost. For the rest of their lives they will live in the glow of that encounter, whose meaning simply grows and grows the longer they meditate on it. When they pass through the valley of darkness, they will only learn more of the One who passed through the grave for them. I think our home, finally, is the place where you find our meaning. No other meaning can lie deeper than the one in the heart of God, in whose Word we are chosen and created, and by whose Word we are saved and brought home. For those of us who have wandered from the Father's house in search

of alternatives, the Gospel has a good story  
about coming home.

*Fr Philip*