

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## The Destruction Of Evil

*Would you like to see evil wiped off the face of the earth? Ooo ah! Are you sure? Wait a minute: it depends: what do you mean by evil? Evil means everything that falls short of the glory of God. Mmm - that does sound a bit much actually; perhaps we should take it steady; I mean, you don't know where it would stop, do you? Could get a bit hairy. I mean to say, nobody's perfect, are they? No indeed. And that's where our problem lies!*

### Not One Of Us

There's some cove going around preaching about Jesus and casting out demons in his name; but "he's not one of us": so let's close him down. Jesus refuses. He seems to think things are much too serious for that sort of exclusiveness. "If he's not against you, he's for you," he says. The hallmark of his being acceptable is that he casts out demons. That puts him on the side of the angels. But does that make Jesus a bit of a softie, as many would see him: a man who has no teeth, and no judgment? Read on a little further.

### Surgery

The only word that comes into my mind in this tract of the Gospel is *surgery*. Jesus is talking about the fierceness with which we must treat the things that lead us into sin: he does not even spare our bodies. It's better to suffer the loss of a limb, even of your eyesight, than to keep your body intact and take it to hell. Now, the last time I thought like that was just before I went to surgery. My surgeon and I were completely at one. He said to me, *Everything I find that is sick, I will cut out*. And I said *Amen* to that. I had not the slightest sentimentality about retaining just a little bit of cancerous tissue, just a few contaminated lymph-nodes. Get it all out, I said, be vicious! Be sharp! Be clear-sighted and total! *Dinna spare!*

### Tearing Out Of Eyes

Jesus says something very moving in Lk 11: "The lamp of the body is the eye. When your eye is clear, your whole body is filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your body too will be darkened." Can we not tell when *our eye is diseased*? When we can't see the world with pure eyes, when our view is distorted and twisted by evil? We walk around offering to enlighten others, when we ourselves have a plank in our eye, and see

everything with distorted eyesight. There's no doubt that Jesus saw very clearly, and deeply valued this precious sense; so when he speaks so brutally about sacrificing the eye if it proves to be an occasion of sin, we can be appropriately shocked.

### Come To Terms Before The Trial

Jesus shows many times his belief in people's consciences. He tells us in one place: *Judge for yourself*. He knows that people have the power to discern right and wrong, and he calls on us to pass judgment on our own deeds, rather than waiting to be dragged into court. For this to happen, we must have some kind of standard by which to judge ourselves, and we must have the courage to see clearly how we measure up to it. Honesty need not be an uncomfortable quality; after all, we don't change what's true simply by refusing to admit it. Not owning up to our failings doesn't make them any the less failings. Even if it's bad news, I would rather be diagnosed correctly than left worrying about my problems. But what then; say we have discovered something in our life that we're ashamed of and even afraid of. Facing up to our own sins involves being ready to make the sacrifices we need, to be rid of them. Suddenly, the courage I showed to the surgeon turns a bit feeble. Can it be true that I've come rather to like my sins? Why can't I easily separate myself from them, renounce them, and avoid them? The truth is that they have got under my skin. They have become so much part of my system that I'm possessed by them. I can't cut them out.

### Remember George?

George Best gave us a very public view of the state of our humanity. Much-loved, admired for his skills, famous: but sick at heart, out of control, and doomed; despite all that surgery and wealth could do for him, he was impossible to save. He wanted people to see his state, and learn from it; and the world shuffled its feet, and looked away embarrassed, not knowing what to say. They gave him something a little short of a state funeral, and loaded him with tributes. But those who watched came away full of questions, deeply unsure. Sometimes, it seems, the spirit of sacrifice may demand something a little like death, before we can be made sound.

*Fr Philip*