

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## It Has To Be Me

How do you feel - and what do you think - about the people you live with: the ones who belong to you? It's a big question. People sometimes won't answer it for years; and when they do everyone is shocked and surprised, one way or the other.

### Sheer Burden

Sometimes the answer is awfully negative. Sometimes they've already shown their colours, and disappeared into the wide blue yonder, leaving us separated and alone. We are left to carry the burdens of our life alone; and the reflection of a deserted mother or father can be unbearably bitter. I'm a celibate priest, and I can get hugely bitter about some of the betrayed people I have in my parish. How *they* deal with their feelings I can hardly imagine. How does a mother deal with the dereliction of a child she carried and gave birth to? It doesn't matter how upset we get with our lot; the people who gave us life are our parents, and we must work out our problems together, and bear one another's burdens. *Honour your father and mother* is the well-known bit of the commandment, but it goes on: *so that your life may be long in the land God gives you*. There's little chance of peace, I think, for a child who tries to forget his father and mother. They are his authors, for good and ill, and they have a gift of peace to give him that no-one else can replace: his welcome into the world. But it cuts the other way too. Children have a gift of grace to give their parents, of gratitude for life and personality. No-one else can replace that, either. How much incurable pain is inflicted between parents and children!

### Paralysis

The pity is that wounds between parents and children can endure so long. Parents feel they can't make things better, because every move they make looks like an assertion of power. Children think they've blown their chances with their parents, or imagine that any softening will look like weak caving-in to parental authority. No field is so beset with wrong thinking and paralysed motives. It is

no coincidence that the ills of the world are depicted in Scripture as a war between parent and child.

### Paralysed Man

In today's Gospel we've got a paralysed man who can't stir for himself. Jesus is inside a house, and so many surround him that the paralysed man's friends can't get him in. So they climb onto the roof, make a hole in the tiles, and the helpless man suddenly appears in the very heart of the proceedings. Love will find a way; and this man has very good friends, who bring him to Christ.

### I Must Blot Out Everything

*My child, your sins are forgiven*. Cutting through the welter of helplessness, Jesus says the most vital thing first. We can never discover what power of sin reigned in this poor bloke's heart as he lay on his stretcher. But Jesus knew what to say first. We might like to reflect on that, and ask whether our struggle to get our life into order may not demand a pilgrimage to the sacrament of Reconciliation. Maybe we need God to cancel our debts if we are to survive and have real hope. If so, how long are we planning to wait, before we try to make it to the Lord's house? Might we be wanting others to carry us there before we come to know our need?

### Lord, Heal My Soul

We can't spend our life at the mercy of our pride, our self-regard, or our willingness to live in the dark. We have to set out, and go to the Saviour. He is our only way, and he is the best of ways and the easiest, quickest way. It is sometimes a test of faith for us: will we wait to buckle at the knees, and trust others to carry us to him in terminal incapacity? I find myself anointing and absolving in hospital people whose determination to endure, and deny, and refuse reconciliation has reached its natural ending along with their earthly powers. I always consider that a moment of grace. But what about those who wait too long, and who refuse too firmly? We have a gift of grace to give to God. *Fr Philip*