

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## The Great Gate

My favourite city, Siena, has a fairly complete encirclement of walls, pierced by the great gates which let in the roads from Volterra, Florence, Rome., and many other places. The greatest of these gates rears up like a huge castle, and carved on it is the city's motto: *Siena opens to you her great heart*. These welcoming words soften the stern battlements crowning the gate: in her strength, the city finds welcome to offer her guests.

### **Blessed In the Name Of The Lord!**

Jerusalem's heart is opened to Jesus today with a triumph: a procession of palms, the leaves of royal victory. It seems the gates are wide open for him, and he is welcomed with an ecstatic crowd, whose memories are stirred with thoughts of King David repossessing his ancient capital. We repeat their greeting at every Mass in the *Sanctus*; and this makes me realise that the function of Palm Sunday is to make us meet at the gate, ready to enter into this holiest Week of all, intent on seeing and understanding everything that makes it up. We are the amazed disciples, who find themselves at the heart of such a procession, and who on Thursday will share in the intimacy of his final Supper, as he insists on washing our feet; we are the citizens, who pluck the palms and olive branches from the trees to salute him; we are the same crowd who on Friday will call for his death. Isn't the Liturgy amazing? It will give us all these ways of sharing, and looking in on, the Passion of Jesus: and the Passion will be our principal way of sharing the mind of God. This is why we call this week Holy Week, and why we must not miss any of our privileges during its great days.

### **The Night He Was Betrayed**

The most powerful evening liturgy of the year is certainly the Mass of Holy Thursday. Once it was the only evening Mass of the year: but even in a Church which is tumbling headlong into celebrating the main mass of Christmas at 6 o'clock of the vigil, it still stands out as the most eloquent and intense Eucharist of

the year. Here we find the great signs of the Church being created: the washing of feet, and the Eucharist itself; here is the setting in which Jesus leaves his last will and testament before leaving for the long night which takes him to Calvary. Here, if anywhere, we can share the mind of Jesus as he lays down his life for the world. The atmosphere is deep in love, alive with mystery: the night will see the agony of Gethsemane, the treason of Judas, the tears of Peter, the trial before Caiaphas, and the shameful dereliction of the disciples.

### **Friday Called Good**

The calm recital of the Passion of John leads us into the heart of the redemption. We shall never finish the task of hearing these words and receiving their gift of insight. The prayer for all creation which follows, and the symbolic unveiling of the Cross for our veneration all contribute differently to the liturgy of the Lord's death. I particularly look forward to the coming of every member of the congregation to the Cross: each in our own way, we receive it and accept it. I find it intensely moving to know even a little of the life of each parishioner, and to realise how the Cross is being carried in so many lives. The communion which follows seems integral to the experience. Whatever our cross, we are one with each other in Christ.

### **This Is The Night!**

The Easter Vigil is a night alive with glitter and brilliance. It contradicts the darkness and depression of the world with divine power, and we can all be powerfully lifted out of darkness by its resonant message: it is the triumph of life. The renewal of Baptism at its heart makes us all new, and reminds us of the promises of God. But it is wonderful how personal the Easter message is. I can love the worst in the world, when the Easter liturgy exerts its power over me once more. The Red Sea washes across our bows, and we pass through without getting our feet wet; but our enemy, everything that diminishes us and robs us, is annihilated, drowned in the waters of the font. Let us all be there, and find

together the joy of Easter!  
*Fr Philip*