

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Trinity

Most of us spend much time musing on our relationships with one another. This is because in our relationships we go beyond selfhood to something more sublime, and more exciting. We all know our need for something “greater than myself”. This is because we often find our selfish life boring and limited: it’s certainly not enough, in itself, to make it worthwhile being in great pain or constant distress. But when we are deeply involved in relationship, almost any degree of suffering becomes tolerable if it is necessary for someone we truly love. Relationship releases the real power of our being, and opens up human life into top gear, and we find out what we’re for.

Penny-Dropping Moments

Now, it’s in that place that we learn what religious language is for, and get a sudden glimpse of the life of God. Just as our lives are a function of the only truly live being (the eternal God), our human relationships are a (faint) reflection of the divine power to relate, which is of stunning splendour and majesty. When we have a good idea, maybe nothing happens, because it takes us a lot of work to move from idea to realisation. When God relates to a good idea, it springs into existence. That’s what it’s like to be The Creator. When we decide we want to share our life with someone, we start with a bunch of flowers, and move painfully forwards by sharing various experiences: eating, shopping, visiting, watching films....We share our thinking (a bit) and sometimes our feelings (as honestly as we know how).

Similarly, But More So

With God it is unimaginably different. When God shares his life, there are no holds barred: *the sharer becomes God*. I know this makes human relating even at its best look a bit crippled and problematic and slow. But the same lines are discernable there, if we think about it. When you love someone, you want to be united with them, you want (if only) to *be* them. You never actually say so, because it would sound absurd. But getting married (*the*

two become one flesh) is all about exactly that. You might use this piece of thinking as a way to understand the Holy Trinity; because I think it helps. What the eternal Father gives the Son is divine life: not a *bit* of his life, or his gold and silver, or the limited things we offer each other: he gives his Son *his whole life*. The Son receives divine life from the Father, and then offers it all back to him in perfect generosity, thus perfectly expressing his divine being. Like his Father, his self-giving is of divine meaning; as the Father gives “God” to the Son, the Son gives “God” to the Father. The gift that passes between them we call “God the Holy Spirit” (*spirit* means *breath*). You can see my helpless language bending and straining with these ideas. But think about them. If that titanic self-gift is at the heart of the Godhead, then there is nothing in God that isn’t giving, or isn’t gift. We can’t imagine giving ourselves in that total way, but only in partial terms. Still, this divine total giving is the life we’re striving to find; it is what we’re made for, and it’s where we’re going. So we can forget about earthly ambitions - to be moguls, or tyrants, or dictators, or authorities of any kind. That’s a dead end. What we need to learn is how to be *givers*. Suddenly the humblest people start to look like contenders: I don’t just mean St Francis; I suspect my mum and dad knew more about that than Napoleon, or perhaps J. Paul Getty did.

Becoming Like God

I don’t think we can make ourselves into God. But fortunately God can do this for us. The Father renews in us his own image, so that we are progressively made like Christ. We are invited to share the life of the Holy Trinity. Giving, and receiving, but more than we thought, more than we let ourselves imagine. Our Church must be changed too, until it becomes a machine for welcoming generosity of every kind, so that we grow in all ways into Christ. You don’t have to be gifted to do this. You only have to be giving. Stop trying to save yourself, for love of the

Gospel, and you will find eternal life.

Fr Philip