

## The Indwelling God

When Solomon had built his Temple, the chronicle tells how he made a great prayer to God for it, acknowledging that even the idea of building a human house for God is a sort of blasphemy. *The heavens themselves, and the heavens above the heavens, are too low for you; can you truly dwell in this house that I have made?*

### House Of God?

Of course God does not “dwell” in any place; he is spirit, and has no need of a house, or indeed any location. Bodies need spaces and houses, spirit doesn't. So we use the word “dwell” in quite a special sense. In the Bible we speak of God “choosing to dwell with men”. We use the name *Emmanuel* which means *God With Us*. We describe people who seek for holiness as *longing for the courts of the Lord*, and we speak figuratively of a church as *God's House*. In all these ways we are involved, and it is really *our* house, *our* dwelling, that gives the meaning to these phrases; it is human beings who need them.

### He Pitched His Tent Among Us

But as soon as Jesus appears, everything changes, and we can truly say that God has started to take up space as we do. Jesus is an individual human being, with a history in time, a body, and all the physical presence that was only a metaphor for God. *The hands of Jesus of Nazareth* are like our hands; *the hand of God* is a turn of phrase. *The face of God* could never be seen by human eyes. *The face of Jesus of Nazareth* could have been caught on camera. Does this make a difference to God? Well - in the sense that nothing can be added to God, no; whatever perfection can live in a human body was already his without being expressed in one. But it surely makes a difference to us: *in him we see our God made visible* to human eyes; and our physical longing to see the God we worship is granted to us in Jesus.

### God Is Present In Flesh

The Resurrection means that Jesus has taken our flesh into the eternity of God; and now in some sense the Eternal God is committed to the very physical world we inhabit in a new way. Our hold on this truth is centred in the Eucharist, where we touch with our hands and see with our eyes the sign of his presence. While ever the Eucharist continues

to be celebrated, the Incarnation of Jesus is made good for every generation. Can God, who is too great to live under the heavens, live in this human house? Now we must say Yes. By his humility and the emptying-out of his glory, he comes to make his home amongst us.

### The Advocate Will Teach You

The Gospel today begins to speak of the Holy Spirit. If we are to accept, and live within, the new world where God is present to us, it is by the grace of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends in Christ's name. *He teaches us everything*, and this unending task is one that, like all teaching, requires the attention of those who learn. *Everything* is a tall order, and it doesn't come like a load of coal, delivered en masse into our personal mental cellar. Rather the Holy Spirit looks out on the world with us, and alerts us to the new meaning everything has because of Easter. He teaches us everything in the sense that he illuminates everything we encounter, and makes it holy, elevating it into the coming Kingdom. We must stay alert to his teaching of us, by which we see the world anew, and live a life of holiness within it.

### The Power Of The Sacraments

When we live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is as if a lid is taken off the old world, and our lungs breathe a wider and larger atmosphere. We activate the power of our Baptism, which gave us birth into a greater life, and the Eucharist, which feeds us with divine food, and our Confirmation, which calls us every moment to think more deeply and to accept more meaning into our life. Some things which seemed important become irrelevant, no longer interesting to us; some things change their meaning, and become vital and precious to us; some things appear to be unfitting, and lose their place in us. In all of this, the God who dwells in his people is preparing in us a place where divine life can be lived, a place where he can truly meet us. Be sure that it will be a greater space, a more perfect life than it was. Be sure also that it will not be a change that we could have brought about by ourselves. If God makes himself a dwelling-place, it will be by his own divine creating power. We shall be made anew by the one who saves us, and by no lesser power.

*Fr Philip*