

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## You Made Us Glorious By Calling Us

There's all the difference in the world between believing in a Creator, and thinking that the world and everything in it is a blind and very complex accident. If it's an accident, then you'd almost have to start worshipping accidents; if my first gasp at catching sight of the Sassolungo in the Dolomites is an accident, then praised be all accidents! But if the world is in fact a work of art, in whatever deep sense, then I stand in awe of the Artist, and learn to trust him when I can't easily understand or love what he brings to pass in my life.

### Look At The Facts

We've mostly got five senses to help us through life. With them we (as we say) *make sense* of ourselves. But we have a terrible tendency to become insensate as we go on; not that our senses themselves fall away, but that the centre to which they bring such a lot of information - our mind and heart - become inattentive to their messages. We get *blasées*, accustomed to wonder, and that's as good as being blind and deaf. For thirty-nine years I've been a lover of Italy, and I've awoken to some stunning sights in visiting that most astonishing land. I wonder how it affects the Italians to wake up every morning in Como or Aosta, in Todi or Cingoli. I've decided that many don't actually see it; they get as bored and discontented as people who wake up and see the Aphrodite Glue Works or Tipton Power Station. *In his riches man lacks wisdom; he is like the beasts that perish.* A great grace, therefore, is to keep our senses sharp, to look and see, to hear and understand, to touch and taste and sniff appreciatively at the plethora of gifts that are given to us, even when we feel poor or lonely: because - believe it - *we are not so.*

### By Calling Us To Himself....

...God makes us glorious. That's what the Book of Wisdom says today. Therefore the key to this awareness lies in the sense of being called - being *creatures* - of a God who might have called someone else, but actually called *us*. This brings us up close and personal with the God who shapes what is wonderful, terrible, superb, appalling, and mysterious about us and our world. For those who decide to seek him, he makes his creation *transparent* to divine light; in the sensing of our world, we can find the Maker.

When you've had that understanding, perhaps in some overwhelming part of your experience, but equally easily somewhere very simple and outwardly unremarkable - the world is changed for you. There is a line in today's Gospel I would concentrate on: Jesus describes the *servants waiting for the Master's return* - by which I understand he means everyone who is hoping to get an understanding of the world and its purpose. Then, the hoped-for happens, and he is with us, and the house we live in is suddenly illuminated, opened in welcome, busy with ceremony and attention. What next? Listen: *He will put on an apron, sit the servants down at table, and wait on them.* This startling happening relates to the realisation of relationship that flows from our belief that we are created - personally called into being by God. Instead of being servants, he makes us into his guests.

### How We Respond

There are other places in the Gospel where Jesus invites us to put on a wedding-garment to come to the feast: in other words, to dress appropriately as guests, to live generously and gracefully, no longer as "accidental" people who are scratching a grudging living from a hostile lump of rock in senseless space. What if, from time to time, we are invited to pass through dark places, to refine our faith amidst adversity and suffering? I believe that the wonder we feel at the gift of life is not diminished by its curtailment or its imperfections. From our imperfect and partial viewpoint we are given glimpses of what is eternal and divine. Let's not mistake our understanding for the mind of God itself. There is always more to await and expect, always a further distance to go before we inherit the light. We mustn't forget to be pilgrims, or become lost on the way.

### In Search Of Our True Homeland

The saints have taught us that the fulness of humanity demands this pilgrim heart, aware of the gifts of God now, but even more hoping for the gifts that lie in the future. In that knowledge we learn *to chant the hymns of the fathers*, evermore preserving the promise of God that orientates us, the compass of our journey. We have this courageous understanding to unite us. We must share it with the world. *Fr Philip*