

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Educating Jesus

I suspect the very thought of educating Jesus is strange to many people, because they don't realise what distortion can enter into our way of thinking and looking at him. When there's theologians involved, you can get into some strange backwaters of thought; for a long time we clergy have had to try to translate the talk of the Vatican into something approaching human thought; it's not always an easy task!

### Divine Knowledge

When we say that "God knows everything", we are making a statement about the divine mind, and that's always dangerous for human beings. Our minds are so limited and little, and the mind of God is so infinitely great, that we can't take in the truth about God. Our minds are wonderful, and we have shown, for instance, that we can take in massive truths about very big things: about the world, and the Grand Canyon, and the distance between the earth and the sun, and about light-years across the Universe. But God is not even contained in the Universe, and the Universe is actually contained in God's mind. Now, you can tell at once that this doesn't mean that God is an unimaginably huge stock of individual bits of knowledge (enquire within on all subjects). His comprehension of all that is and could be is (instead) something peacefully One. If we had to hold together even ten thousand names and faces, it would defeat us. We should not think of God as a super-monster thinking machine with infinite pigeon-holes. I think there is a clue to the mind of God in the Letter to the Ephesians, where it says that *before the world was made, God chose us in Christ*. His gaze was therefore never diverted from the face of his beloved Son, who is also known as his *Word*. God knows all things as modes of being reflecting his Son, who is his equal and his Beloved.

### Learning To Be Human

When Jesus chose to become what we are, he emptied out this comprehension of all things, and accepted a human mind. Alongside that, he accepted the way a human mind grows in knowledge and wisdom. Like us, Jesus entered the world empty. Everything that was to be in his mind had to come through his nose, his tongue, his eyes, his ears, and his nerve-endings. That means that Jesus had to

be educated in all things; and the job was entrusted to Mary and Joseph, and it started out in a room behind a carpenter's shop in Galilee, a place full of foreigners and hard knocks.

### The Beauty Of Christ's Mind

Somehow, out of the humdrum and rather squalid circumstances of a lost town ("*Nazareth? Can anything good come out of that place?*") says one unbiased observer in the Gospel according to John) in a poor province of an occupied land on the thin end of the Roman Empire, comes forth the Saviour of the human family. Towering holiness, awesome ideals, massive mystery that has fascinated and possessed millions of his sisters and brothers for two millennia came to live in his mind and be poured out to his listeners, so that the earth reeled on its axis and was shaken in its path. What was in the mind of the two parents who held him in their arms as a child? Nothing special, I feel quite sure, except the knowledge that he was the most beautiful baby they had ever seen, and that he was going to have the very best life they could share with him, and that he would never lose their hearts as long as they lived. After that, they wanted him to be properly fed and clothed, and be given a safe home despite all those sharp edges and hot gluepots, and to grow up happy with his friends, careful with the crockery, considerate to his elders, and respectful of his religion. What is clear from the Gospel is that they spent their lives being stunned and amazed at him, until we see Mary and the others trying to re-assert their authority, to bring him home to Nazareth...only to be told: *the people who are listening to me are my mother, and sisters, and brothers*.

### It Hasn't Been Easy

It's a lifetime's pouring out of love to educate a child. If you feel that your family is difficult, unusual, a bit star-crossed, not quite right, think for a while about Mary, Joseph and Jesus, and be comforted by the way they faced their life together. Mary was there at the Christmas beginning, and at the bitter end on Calvary, and at the extraordinary birthday that is Pentecost. I wonder what she thought of her family as he hung on the cross, and said: *Mother, this is your Son*. Not easy. But a divine mystery of grace. *Fr Philip*