

## You Must Be Perfect

“What do you mean, 94%?” said my father, as I cockily announced my mark. “What happened to the other 6%?” Unforgettable sense of humour; you *knew* he was taking a swipe at your complacency. But it left a taste of pain, a memory of the cutting edge of 100%, the sharp dangerousness of the word *perfect*.

### Perfect Belongs To God

The old Catechism “defined” God as “the Supreme Being, infinite in all perfections”. God cannot be defined, because that would limit him (Who is not masculine); definition draws boundaries round what it describes, and therefore God, Who is limitless, can’t be defined. That seems to say that even the perfections of God (rightly called *infinite* by the Catechism) can’t be described either; we know only limited kindness, limited being, relative excellence; and God has no end to his perfection. So we can truly say that no-one can be perfect as God is....

### ...unless...

...God exercises his infinite power and grace to *make* us perfect. This raises a big question: is it possible, is it conceivable, that a human being – “defined” as limited, weak, fallible, could become a sharer in divine perfection? The incident that comes to mind from the Gospels is from Jesus’ teaching on the danger of riches. *It is harder for a rich man to get into heaven than for a camel to get through the eye of a needle.* The astonished disciples said: *Who then can be saved?* Jesus gazed at them. *By human resources it is impossible,* he said, *for God, everything is possible.* Knowing this makes us look again at our imperfections. We show our worldliness in the way we look to one another for approval, instead of seeking for the glory of God. *Worldliness* here means finding the world enough for us, as people would who say, *All I want is to win the lottery, and to relax for the rest of my life.* God doesn’t want us to become pigs, but beloved children who look forward to inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven. This means that worldliness is a trap for us, which cuts off short our true destiny.

### Win Or Lose

I remember a seaside penny-machine, where a ball-bearing fired into a spiral had to fall into one of ten chutes. Eight said *Win* and two said *Lose*. To my simple mind it seemed certain that you had 4 chances out of 5 to win. Somehow, the silver ball always found its way to the *Lose* trap, and by the time I’d understood, I had no pennies left. I guess the world must look a bit like that at first: attractively furnished with plenty of paths to happiness, and a few small dangerous bits to negotiate. Little by little one learns to refuse to trust the blandishments of the Fast Buck philosophy, and to look more soberly at the cost of the way of perfection. In the end, only holiness will do; you can’t swap it for enlightened self-interest, or business acumen, or benevolent exploitation of market forces. And we say that God is “the fountain of all holiness”. Unless we learn to seek the help of God, we shall always be limited, frustrated, unhappy beings that don’t know why life has been so tough. Because what we really want is beyond us, unless he reaches out to us with his grace to perfect us.

### O Yes, Believer!

It seems to come down to our decision: to believe or not to believe. I don’t think the big question of belief is about God’s existence; oddly, most people, even in this hard-nosed secular world, still believe in that. The real test is: *Do you believe that God – Whoever or Whatever He/She/It is - loves you and wants you to share?* Now that takes some real believing, and if we decide *Yes*, it’s going to involve us in some serious religion: prayer, listening, searching for God, and doing his work as we go. *Fr Philip*