

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

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## Who'd Have Thought?

The most wonderful thing about the living God is that he is alive. Is 44 describes a wood-carver, who takes a large piece of wood; with half he cooks his lunch; with the other half he makes an idol to worship. The thing about idol-worship is that the god we make up is made up to *our* requirements, and is therefore based on *us*; but it's actually *less* than we are. So we end up worshipping what is meaner than we are; and that can only demean us.

### Go Higher, Friend

To be healthy, we must worship something that is greater than we are. *And God is greater.* He shows us this fact whenever he differs from us; if God always did what we wanted, he would be our servant (and show every sign of being an idol). But God isn't like that. He constantly displays his difference from us, and does things we would never have done. *Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?* We sometimes find this awesome, infuriating; or heart-breaking. But it isn't dull! Our life is not a mail-order system, where we pray and God acts accordingly. It's a relationship with a God who has a mind of his own. Little by little, he reveals it to us, he lets us share his mind.

### The Living Word

*My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways;* can't we hear echoes there of the prayer of Jesus: *Not my will, but your will be done!* And I think that prayer has a good claim to being the most perfect. It contains the surrender, the obedience which is sacrificial - in other words, the Cross itself which is the heart of the Faith. It also says in the highest possible way: *You are my God, my happiness lies in you, not in my own plans.* It may seem, on reflection, strange that we should be empowered to make room for God in this way. How the Almighty exalts us! It is really he who makes room for us in his designs. But the "me" he wants is different from the "me" I think of. I have to learn from him what he wants me to become; and if I can discern his mind for me, I shall be better able to choose and to grow.

### Success or Failure?

This makes me think that when my designs come down in flames, there may be something mysteriously fruitful happening. God seems able to do most when things are, humanly speaking, falling apart. That's why the Cross and Sepulchre are his studio, why he is first shown to us creating out of nothing, why Jesus seeks the broken and the disinherited. Paul knows that *the power of God is at its best in weakness.* Perhaps in faith it is the same: when our faith is full of proper feelings, and we seem to have a real grasp of it, we are really mistaking our human grip for the knowledge of God. And when our mind reels, and the world looks disjointed and uncertain, and we are most unsure, then the true virtue of faith, that is a pure entrusting of ourselves into God's hands, can possess us completely. Is that success, or failure?

### Eleventh Hour Recruits

We take a long time to tune ourselves to God's mind. Our ideas are so persuasive to us, so convincing, that we have no ears for anything different; and God is so often differently-minded! I think of St Peter, who follows Jesus, apparently faithful; yet he is not wholly trustful of Jesus. He keeps his sword by him, so that one day he may save Jesus from all that nonsense about dying on a cross. Truly Peter is only really recruited to the ranks of the disciples when his own plans have come down in flames. If the Passion were the end of the story, Peter would not be in it. In God's mercy, at the eleventh hour, room is found for him at Jesus' side. *Fr Philip*