

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

I Have Invested In You!

Human beings are dangerous. They have huge powers for good, making them lovely and precious; they have corresponding and necessary powers to choose evil, which brings into their span the horrific and the hideous. It is because we so treasure the first, that we so fear the second. We're vulnerable to the evil that we and others do; when we see other human beings choosing what is ugly and selfish, something of our own good will dies within us. Once lied to, we find it harder to trust the next person, however innocently honest. Once mugged, we walk the streets furtively, like people with something to hide. Evil rubs off on you, and spreads like a contagion. My mistrust will prevent me from creating open and kind relationships; my fear will make me cautious and negative. So I too will start to damage the world and close down its future. Why is it so hard to repair these ravages? Why won't simplicity and sanctity run through the population as easily as their opposites?

Three Pearls of Great Price

We have to be utterly resolved not to allow the crude onslaught of what's negative to overwhelm the forces of love in us. Don't assume that goodness always survives in the end, that decency outweighs nastiness, and that all will be well. Such gentle reflections belong in the contemplative's eternity; in the thick of struggling and living they can be deceptive drugs, paralysing the hands that must help to save the world. *Be as cunning as serpents, and innocent like doves.* We can all change the way things are, if we begin with ourselves. Faith, hope, and love are risky, uncomfortable, hard realities to preserve. But they're the only things that can reverse the tide of evil. They have to be alive in us, clung to and trusted by us day by day, so that what we do is done in God. Trusting God's promises means chucking away the alternatives. We can't serve two masters, so there has to be a choice made, deep and solid, which spreads through *all* our departments. If you say you are hoping for the kingdom of heaven on Sunday, it's no use being a hard-nosed

materialist with a mind like a cash-register for eighteen hours a day Monday to Friday, with double-time on Saturday morning. If you say you want to love your spouse till death on your wedding-day, it's no use filling your heart and mind with dreams of infidelity, however sensitively they may be served up by fiction and film. If you say you want a world where people trust one another, but live your life chained up in a bunker with barbed wire and a burglar alarm, you are daydreaming. Goodness of life doesn't just happen by accident. It requires strategic planning - and the deliberate sacrificing of all alternatives. *Lay aside the sword.*

What Does God Want From Me?

God the Creator has buried in us seeds of his love. We have to recognise them and be faithful to them: they are his investment in us, they are his image in us. We may find them awkward gifts, because they characteristically get us into trouble. Divine blessings aren't easy to take into our planning. We're unused to them, and they're beyond our control. Ten talents to trade with: we've been trusted with much: much will be demanded. The world's demands are engrossing and authoritative: *it will have your soul.* Belonging to God must be equally committed if it is to survive what the world throws at it. Jesus said: *I tell you this now, so that you may remember that I told you. In the world you will have trouble; but be brave: I have overcome the world.*

Fr Philip