

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

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## We The Clay, You The Potter

*We have all withered like leaves, and our sins blew us away like the wind...for you hid your face from us, and gave us up to the power of our sins...there is the authentic voice of unredemption, that cold estrangement from our Maker which makes the heart bleak behind our darkened windows. But this weekend marks new beginnings. The start of a new year of grace, with all the freshness of the Advent poetry - winter weariness suddenly illuminated by a sense of the oncoming dawn: *Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.**

### **Tear The Heavens Open**

The scriptures always offer us hope, a way to pray for God to be God, a way to suffer that does not destroy us, a way to find meaning without warping the truth. If in this dark season you feel life is slipping from you with its light and warmth, if you feel hardships tightening their grip on you, the passage of time itself might appear meaningless and fruitless. These are winter feelings, and the scripture shares them, speaking of the hardening of hearts, the wandering from goodness, the reduction to tatters of our integrity. Yet, says the prophet, *you yourself are still our Father: our Redeemer is your ancient name...we the clay, you the potter: we are all the work of your hand.* The firmness, the consolation of these words speaks deeply to us; we know that behind the forces that seem to be faceless and senseless, the power of God's love is alive, forming and cherishing the work of his hands. This is what lies hidden behind Jesus' words on the Cross: *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.* Jesus could not, from the tangle of his foundering senses, do anything better than surrender everything to his Father. That is the prayer of the clay to the potter, not demanding to know what is done to it, but surrendering itself to the hand that shapes it. Relax, don't struggle! There is much to be said for an obedient suppleness on the potter's wheel.

### **A New Birth, A New Spirit**

On this first day of a new year we are welcoming new members into the Body of Christ and into our community. They are before us today as living signs of the newness of the Gospel, which comes to us freshly, as God's word *today*, or on this day especially, *this year*. Baptism does not deceive or

decay, like a purely human birth, of which we hear: *Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery*; the birth that is Baptism has the guarantee of God's eternity, and is cause for real rejoicing. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit is an indwelling of God that will never be withdrawn from us. The bread that we feed on as travellers is the indefectible food of everlasting life. These three sacraments we share in today - the sacraments of initiation, or more familiarly, of beginning, do not atrophy or perish away. We who share in the Easter mystery each year *renew our strength, and put forth wings like eagles.*

### **Visit This Vine And Protect It**

Do not think of the visitation of God as a trivial affair, but as something deserving the language of apocalypse. God's protection can take the form of divine vindication - vengeance: Job says: *I know that my Avenger lives, who at the last will arise over the dust of earth: after my awakening, he will set me close to him, and from my flesh I shall see God.* Advent is a journey from winter dumps to the springs of rebirth, and that amazing first reading on the Winter Solstice itself: *For see, winter is past, the rains are over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the season of glad songs has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land!* This is a distant, but delicious, pledge of spring. A Happy Advent! *Fr Philip*