

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## The Day of the Lord

The passage of time has about it a sort of contradictory feel. In one sense it is almost imperceptible: it creeps on leaden feet, and we find it a source of dreariness, as Ecclesiastes (that miserable old devil) does. *The sun rises, he says, the sun sets, then back to its station it goes, and the sun rises again, and there is nothing new under the sun.* Well, and is that good news or bad news? And is it even true?

### What Heraclitus Thought

He thought that everything was only apparently stable. In reality, he said, everything is in a state of flux. And guess what? Atomic physics says something quite similar. Atoms aren't little blocks of stability. They're whirling little solar systems, held together by electricity. The Rocky Mountains are fluxing away like nobody's business, and the Koh-I-Noor diamond is, if you did but know it, like an anthill or a firework-display. Heraclitus thought a river was never the same river twice, but flowing, and therefore new every moment. Those good people who bring back bottles of Jordan Water because *this is the water in which Jesus was baptised* are the victims of a con-trick.

### Something's Ticking

said the customs-officer; and there is indeed something ticking in the world. Once you've heard it, you're never the same again, because you have heard the time-bomb. It isn't the work of the IRA. It is quite literally a time-bomb: time itself is the culprit, and spells the end of everything that exists in it. Time gets us all in the end, even the Sphinx and the Pyramids. Once you know this, the ticking of the innocent bedside clock can sound positively lethal. I've just heard someone claim that *he's been killing time all day*, which is ironic, and shows how powerfully central the idea I'm thinking about really is.

### God's Time

God is the Creator of time, but does not himself live in it. This is something hard for us to think about, as even to think we need time. All change requires time: there is one time when we are happy, and then there is another time, and (10) we are sad. This is why God is changeless, and why, when we go to him, we shall also be changeless. And it is also why we need Purgatory, if we are to change a little more after our death; in Purgatory

there has to be time, so that there can be change. But at last there comes the moment when God, so to speak, will send to blow full-time, not on a referee's whistle, but on an archangelic trumpet; and then we shall be *taken up to meet Christ in the clouds*, and enter into the timeless ecstasy which is God's life.

### God's Day

The dawning of that Day, then, is going to deal death to the timebound world, the slavery of humanity to the clock and the hourglass, the leaden progression of one moment to the next, which spoke to Ecclesiastes of pointlessness and repetition. If you re-read today's Gospel with this thought in your mind, it may come to sound differently. This weekend I shall be away on retreat with 48 students who have broken bounds to experience something new. For forty-eight hours we shall live quite differently in a different place: we hope to find a difference in our living. But this will only be a tiny taste of the transformation we hope for, when all that decays and betrays will be swept from our paths, and in our last moment of history, we shall be swept up into the glorious Day which is the End of Time....

*Fr Philip*