

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

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## The Banquet of Wisdom

The illustrious tones of Wisdom call us to her table in the first reading today, and we are given a sense of the graceful reality of divine knowledge in human life. How does God live with humanity? Sometimes the fearfulness of divinity overcomes us, and we shiver before the greatness of God. How could it be otherwise? To catch a glimpse of God's "otherness", his being greater than we know how to say, is a revelation of our own littleness, insignificance, transience. We pass away, while God endures eternally; we exist, we live partially; God exists, lives; limitlessly. We exist dependently - because God creates us; God exists simply because he exists.

### In God's Image

Still, there is something about us that does shine with likeness to God: a yearning for the infinite, a taste for the absolute. "You're never satisfied," we are told by our elders; and we should reply: *No - and neither are you*, a response almost certain to result in boxed ears, but true none the less. We aren't satisfied, and that is because our desire is designed to be humanly insatiable. People who experience an accustomed sense of satisfaction are called smug, and we feel a powerful urge to demolish their complacency, and re-introduce them to the human family, where people know their limitations, are aware of their shortcomings, and so on. Of course, the obverse of knowing our limitations is to glimpse the *unlimited* - to sense the joy and glory of perfection, of divinity itself. We can hardly deceive ourselves for very long about our imperfections; if we try, they come to haunt us! But if we believe that God is infinite and perfect in the fulness of life, we are not obliged to surrender to our weaknesses. When God tells us that we have been chosen to inherit a share in his life, we are given the strongest grounds for hope. Again, we do not have to believe that we can produce perfection by some proceeding of our own. It's vital that we believe in grace - the undeserved gift God offers us. People who trust their own powers of improvement are quite as obnoxious to us as the ones who can't imagine anything better than themselves.

### Wisdom Feeds Us

So we need saving from complacent confidence in our own loveliness, and we need saving from despairing gloom about our failings. This is the

work of Wisdom. It means that we are granted to see ourselves as God sees us: with clarity and good judgment, but also with the eye of love. The Old Testament is rich in pictures of Wisdom, describing her as a beautiful woman with a lively sense of hospitality. *Come along to my house*, she says: *I will give you everything!* The Bible is terribly blatant about this - look at *Proverbs*, *Wisdom*, and above all *the Song of Songs*, and you will see what I mean. We mustn't mistake the image that is presented to us here: look at Wis 6:12: "Wisdom is brilliant, unfading; by those who love her she is readily seen. She anticipates those who desire her by making herself known first. Whoever rises early to find her will have no trouble, but will find her sitting at their door. For she herself searches out those who are worthy of her, anticipating their every thought." This describes a woman who is forward, even "fast"! A rather modern woman, who makes the running. So in our relationship with God, we have to stop wasting time with fibs and circumlocutions, and call a spade a spade - get to first base, and communicate with God. Wisdom is a lady, and the Word is a man; but the realism and urgency are the same. There is something very real - down to earth - about the Wisdom of God: particularly since the Fourth Gospel said, deceptively simply, *The Word was made flesh.* *Fr Philip*