

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

You Know Him

Jesus is speaking to us about the Spirit of truth *which the world can never receive, since it neither sees nor knows him*. But we do know him, because he is with us, he is in us.

Anointed with the Spirit

You've heard that before, when your Baptism and Confirmation were being explained to you. But "knowing" the Spirit isn't the same as that. I'm *told* I have a hepatic portal vein, but I'm not at all sure what it is, and never think about it from one year's end to the next. Do I really *know* it? Honestly, no; yet I suspect I couldn't do without it. I'll go now and look it up.

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I was right. If it packed up its salvific work I'd turn a funny colour and pop my clogs. That is how it is with the Spirit.

Full Of Spirit And Truth

The Word came into the world, and we saw him: full of Spirit and truth. I think this means that when we met Jesus we saw the truth about the Spirit. When I see a miser, and catch a glimpse of what meanness can do to a human being, it changes me. When I meet a loving and gentle person, it works in the opposite direction. But the encounter also says something about me. When I find myself at the mercy of some troublesome jobsworth who spends all his time looking for obstacles to set in the way of others, do I resolve to become a co-operator, a helper, a facilitator of the plans of others? Or do I decide that if that's how the world is, I'll become just as obstructive and difficult in response? When Jesus moved amongst us, he elicited both responses. Some people repented and became believers: others were hardened into hatred. Being the Son of God, Jesus pushed this drama to its ultimate crisis; he made us pass judgment on him, and insisted that our verdict would be binding – on him, but also on us. He insisted on going to the wire, on being taken and judged. That is where Peter's use of the sword was so obnoxious to Jesus: *You are an obstacle in my path*, he said, and it was true. It was vital that Jesus go to be judged, and it is vital for us to judge him.

Spirit Of Truth

Judgment is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and if we come to decide that Jesus Christ is our way to life, it is a genuine sign that the Spirit of

truth is at work in us. No-one could think this was an easy decision. To know a crucified criminal as the Lord of life is not an easy conclusion to reach. For the disciples it was the only conclusion they could draw. That's why they are so important to the Church. They knew Jesus, and they all wrestled with the impact he made on them. He wasn't an easy person to live with; but once having been close to him, he wasn't easy to walk away from. Even his ghastly death, frightfully as it hit them, couldn't terminate the relationship. The first Easter displayed a new kind of relating that was freed from the power of death. It seems right to us that this should take some time to have its effect on them; Eastertide, fifty days of it, are our memorial entry into this process. We are learning for ourselves the implications of Christ. This can only be taught by the Spirit of truth, which the world can never receive.

School Of The Spirit

The Church must always remain different from the world for this reason. Sometimes we would like our Gospel to be obvious to all, easily translated into the words of earthlings. *It can't be so*. If the world were so easy to save, would Christ have died? If the faith of the Christians made perfect sense to the children of the world, who would have crucified him? Yet he was crucified, and our trust in him had to be set against that annihilation in this world, so that it could speak to us of eternity. As we celebrate the Ascension this week, let our hearts ascend with him.

Fr Philip