

Speaking of the Spirit

"If any man is thirsty, let him come to me; let the man who believes in me come to me and drink! As Scripture says: *from his breast shall flow fountains of living water.*" Jesus, we are told, *was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive*

Life In The Spirit

Most of us are very bad at living spiritually. We think of life almost exclusively in terms of physical reality. And we turn to physical realities to regulate the quality of our life. If we feel a lack of meaning we weed the garden or make bread. If we are depressed we give a party. If we are feeling poor we go shopping or devour too much food. Sometimes this is enough. The body can be sending simple messages asking for exercise, or food, or rest. But often there are deeper needs in our life which we try to supply with the same range of physical treatments, and which require far deeper healing. Then we are left "dead in the water" unless we can enter the depth of our spirit, and find the source of our pain or need. We often need help from another person here, and the signs are that such help is less often sought these days, and less easy to find. Why are people so prone to become addicted today? Isn't it because we are rich enough to indulge ourselves with addictive things like alcohol, tobacco, and worse, and they seem to inject physical comfort a little deeper than other things? But they do not reach the heart of the human condition. When they seem to work, it is by anaesthesia -we dope ourselves into a sense of stability; but it is a stability which resembles death more than life.

When We Cannot Choose Words When we are truly confronted with the needs of the human spirit, we are silenced; because we need to understand the whole depths of our being. We know that there are vast tracts of our soul too deep for the twittering world of conscious reflection, where we know how to talk about ourselves. There are memories, messages, responses there which are deeper than our knowledge, a world of mysteries buried in a labyrinth. We only dimly sense these sub-conscious spaces, but it is clear

enough that they exist and that they have huge influence on our lives. This is the area which must be explored by the Spirit of God, who has always *moved over the waters of the abyss*. The Spirit finds nothing strange in *us*, nothing terrifying. The Spirit knows how the vast untracked spaces of our depths, which so frighten *us*, can resound with the mind of God, can become a temple alive with divine love. *God said: Let there be light, and there was light; and God saw that it was good.* Explorers on every frontier have shivered before the greatness of the unknown. They have also discovered that, beyond their ignorance and fear, there is wonder and glory to be found.

Baptised in One Spirit

There are many inequalities in the visible part of the world. In the bodily levels we've made many mansions, and taught ourselves a typically quirky set of values based on physical reality: film or pop stars deserve palaces, footballers deserve £30,000 per week, politicians are the most interesting people on earth, white Westerners deserve to own most of the world, black Africans don't matter much, and the rest. But in truth the spiritual reality of the great of the earth may well be deformed and underfed, their true humanity damaged and immature, their inner self unvisited and neglected to the point of disaster. Conversely, the simplest and least powerful of the poor may tower above them in spiritual stature, and display the divine quality of forgiveness, or the gifts of wisdom, insight, counsel, power, knowledge, and awe in the presence of God, which have always signalled *not* a plethora of human wealth, but the indwelling of the Spirit of God. We are offered great promises about the resources of the spiritual life. We should call them out. *Fr Philip*