

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

A Day To Remember

I can remember my first holy communion day, but that isn't what I mean by the title! It's a day for remembering, for beginning a lifetime of remembrance, in the spirit of the words: *Do this in memory of me*. We should be consecrated, on our first Communion day, to this special work Jesus asks of us - for each person, the work of remembering brings forth a different sort of fruit.

Marked By The Past

We are all etched and loaded and pruned and wounded as we go on our way. Some of the markings we acquire are scars and stains - we're all of us damaged goods. Some of what we pick up will be enrichment, adorning the person we are with gifts or honours. The really important things are both; what makes us really worthy is always a wound, always won at great cost; the marks of self-giving, the laying-down of life. These are also the most characteristic of our possessions: when the risen Jesus wants to be recognised, *he showed them his hands and his side*. These deep realities are written in his flesh, etched into his person; for him, they will never belong to the past, but will be carried with him wherever he is (how wrong that old hymn was, that calls on Mary to "remind thy Son that he has paid the price of our iniquity"! He needs no reminder). The Lamb of God is risen from the dead, throned amid the seraphim, but always *slain*.

God's Present

Our act of remembering - the Eucharist - is just the same: not a journey backwards into the past, which gets a kind of ghostly existence from our power to recall it, but an entrance into the heart of the present. The realest thing there is, at this or any moment, is the living God. This super-reality, or super-nature, is so real that we worship him as Creator, or Communicator of life to us. It is as if God is *live*, in the electrical sense: the Old Testament is full of this thought, since the stories constantly depict human nature as *charged* by contact with God (the bright face of Moses, the thunderbolting of malefactors, and so forth). Fullness of life doesn't stand still: it is fruitful, it overflows into new life; this is written into our nature, the way we come into the world. So with God, life overflows boundlessly, *he sends forth his breath, and we are created; he renews the face of the earth*.

Communion with the Living Christ

God is not a memory, but a living presence. So what we call our "remembrance" of Jesus is not a recalling of a *past* event, but communion with a living person. It is not surprising that he is free of the limitations we suffer from time and space. We find ourselves located precisely by the position of our bodies. Sometimes we feel imprisoned, and pray *out of the depths*, and sometimes we feel exalted, and say *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. But when we are in communion with Christ, we are set above that limitation, as Christ makes himself one with us wherever we are; at a stroke, the realest thing about that place is that Christ is in it, and not just us. This makes the experience of the Mass the most privileged use of time. You could find nothing greater or more positive to do with your time, with three-quarters-of-an-hour! Nothing more radical can happen to our nature than this communion with the God who eternally is.

Revealed To Mere Children

As we celebrate First Holy Communion day, let us fix our thoughts on the gift these little ones receive. They are setting their small feet today on a journey that is too far for a human lifetime, one which no human courage or vision could dream up, let alone accomplish. But the Son of God has come to meet them, and so they will know, by his power, that their Redeemer is alive; and in their own flesh they will see God. *Fr Philip*