

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

## Threeness

Threeness is a particularly *solidifying* idea. It's a great advance over twoness; a drawing has two dimensions, but a real object usually has three. A two-legged stool is a pretty unstable article; but a three-legged one can stand up. Of people we say, *two's company; three's a crowd*. I'd amplify that idea and say: *Two's a relationship; three's a community*. It's because God is a community that there's hope for us. This triune God wants us to share in his life, and this sharing we call *communion*.

### Height and Breadth and Depth

*Knowing* is, I think, a better word than *knowledge*. Knowing doesn't stand still, like a thing we can possess. It's a verb, not a noun: it explores and expands and journeys; it works like yeast, grows like seed, smoulders like a fuse. I have plenty of knowledge of dead facts (did you know Nottingham Cathedral is 176 ft high?) But *knowing the height of the love of Christ* is not a matter of measuring, but a matter of soaring upwards into it. It is real *knowing*, but it isn't measurable *knowledge*. The Bible has that concept of knowing; it is an act of love. Acts of love result, we find, in threeness. So the Feast of the Holy Trinity reveals to us that our own entrance into the dimension of love, which brings us to the fount of new life, to genesis, makes us like God, who is the ultimate fountain of life. In God, there are Three, whose lives eternally interpenetrate and generate, like a sun that hurls forth planetary offspring, a great and everlasting explosion of creativity, eternally giving and receiving, setting out and arriving, welcoming and being welcomed. Our destiny is to return to this Creator God, and to find ourselves truly at home in the communion of the Eternal.

### How About Now?

With such a destiny before us, we can take a new look at the way we ought to travel on our way there. We should want our progress to God to reflect our hope of arrival, so that we do not arrive in disarray for so momentous a meeting. Further, the community we are preparing to enter is not just for us, but for all; and we want to bear witness to this destiny, so that others can join us on the journey, and we can help one another, and share the loads all travellers bear, and so come to taste a little of what our arrival will be like. This leads to the sharing of *communion* here on earth, on our

way, that has importance far beyond the people who share it. The Church is a sign for the world of his reality - Christ, who said *I am the Way*; the Spirit enables us to be recognised as people of the Way, as pilgrims towards the Eternal.

### The Religion of the Incarnation

It is said of God's salvation, "Without Him, we cannot; without us, He will not." Knowing God isn't like any other kind of knowing. The Grand Canyon is what I have never seen, but I have every confidence in its existence. I feel sure that, if necessary, someone could take me there and tip me into it, and give me what we call "proof" - that is, real experience of it. The life of Jesus was real like that, and we preserve with great care and reverence the records we have of it. But to know the Father, we must reach beyond that historic fact, to a knowing based on faith. This faith-knowing deepens and grows stronger, the more we live our life by it; and it is as if the Spirit, so close to us that we can miss his presence, turns our reality into the third element, as we are ourselves swept up in the mystery of the Word-taking-flesh. It is when our lives resound with the life of the Spirit that we speak of the Trinity to the world. This never ceases to be a matter of faith; because that free decision to trust, to give ourselves to the promise, to live in hope, is beautifully alive, is totally different from the dead certainty, which we would sometimes, ignobly, prefer.

*Fr Philip*