

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

In You I Take Refuge

She was in her twenties, working at her career, involved with her friends, loved and supported by a good family. Yesterday she was driving through heavy rain, and there was a terrible accident, and she was unconscious in an ambulance. The surgeons operated at midnight, but this morning she died.

Broken hearts

Our faith is no good if it doesn't help here. The very word "religion" means "tying together"; it's the ability to *connect* our whole experience and make sense of it. But how do you accept this sort of experience into your life? It seems to speak of cruel disorder, a heartless, careless world where what is precious is poured away, what is treasured is wasted. Instead of wholeness, brokenness; instead of fulfilment, emptiness and loss. How can it make sense for a mother and father to be brought to such a funeral? How do you face such a day? The scripture says: *The Lord is close to the broken-hearted: those whose spirit is crushed, he will save.* But we stand in awe of a divine compassion that can encompass all the grief of this world. Even a little of it is often too much for us.

The Help of God

Could God have helped? Never, surely, by prevention. He gave us the mind to build a car, and a modern road, and the courage to live in this fast, urgent world. We could not ask him to give us these freedoms with one hand, and to interfere with our exercise of them whenever it threatens us. "A world where nothing went wrong" may sound like a wonderful world; but it would not be *this* world, and those who lived in it would not be human. It is *because* people are so fragile, that they are so precious to us. It is also because of the presence of evil, that goodness is so expensive. The Church has constantly taught that *we live lives that are wounded*, and somewhere in that mystery the secrets of humanity seem to lie hidden. We rejoice in a world where we can speed along wet roads in our little dry chariot; but tyres still slide, and speeding vehicles still collide, and bodies are still precious and vulnerable, which is why we love and cherish

them so tenderly, and why their wounds and loss touch us so deeply, and make all our technology look like a mockery of what we really are.

The Burden of Sin

"To you all flesh will come, with its burden of sin." These ancient words, so weary with grief, have reminded us through many centuries of our community with the dead, our need to mourn, and the relationship with God which all the living and the dead share. At last we shall all come to him, and our burdens will at last be unbuckled, and laid down in his presence. The burden of sin is borne by the sinner; but it is also borne by the victim of sin. Surely the leader of that procession of the whole human family is our Redeemer, and his burden is the Cross. The help of God was made known to us in his crippled journey to the top of the hill where he was lifted up to die. The presence of God at that place where evil and good are locked in battle is the most shocking of discoveries, "to the Jews, an obstacle they cannot get over; to the Greeks, madness; but to those who have been called, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God." Calvary was just as devastating a place as this is; and the cry of Jesus makes us sure that God is shockingly present here too, even in this apparently senseless suffering.

I am the Resurrection!

"Do you believe this?" Jesus' question to Martha, mourning for her brother, whom they both loved, is asked of all who mourn. He always asks enormous trust of those who come seeking for his healing. When he asks us to come so very close to the Cross, we need all our courage, all our experience of believing. But once we have caught hold of the meaning of the Cross, which the faithless cannot grasp, our path becomes clearer. Those who really love find hidden strength to suffer bravely. *"A woman in childbirth suffers..."* and the generous lesson learnt then continues, to the foot of the Cross, and beyond. May the Lord of Easter, the Lord of the unlooked-for resurrection, bring joy to those who mourn. May we comfort one another with words of faith. And when we

seek wearily for somewhere significant to
stand, somewhere to lay down our young, let
it be at the altar of God. *Fr*
Philip