

To Bee or not to Bee?

East Window, June 2002

I was fascinated to read recently that when a honey bee returns to the hive having found a good source of food it does an intricate little dance to the delight of all the other bees in the hive. The dance is so complex that it took Von Frisch forty years to map the dances and to verify what bee-keepers had always suspected – that the bee's choreography is read by the other bees to inform them of the precise location of the wonderful source of nectar which the dancing bee has found. When we remember that the bees' search for food can range over forty square miles, we begin to appreciate that the bee's dance has to be spot on.

More recently still, we have discovered that the mathematics upon which the bee dance is based is a mathematics beyond the intelligence of most of human beings. The only other known physical process to which such a mathematics applies has to do with the quarks of quantum theory – a system of mathematics only known to a handful of human beings. What's more, it may just mean that bees are aware of what is happening at the world's sub-atomic level – and able to operate at that level without disturbing it – which human beings are simply not able to do!

Some people like to proclaim that the human being is 'the measure of all things', and that with application the human mind is capable of knowing everything. But I am happy that the tiny honey bee can remind me that there is so much in this majestic universe of which I will never be aware. Some artistic human beings have a wonderful sense of music and some artists a significant spatial skill, and they are able to take us normal folk beyond ourselves into those realms which they have discovered. I take my hat off to them – but for me it is even more moving when one meets a human being who clearly has a spiritual awareness beyond the capabilities of most. I go every other month to see my 'Confessor' or what some call their 'Spiritual Director' and I share with him how my walk with God is progressing, and he is so helpful in offering suggestions to better my prayer and my devotional life. From his deep experience he is often able to tell me where to search for nectar, for he's been on the journey before me and has found the most nourishing spiritual treasure stores.

I would suggest to anybody who wants to find more sustaining spiritual food to have such a spiritual mentor of their own – why not ask your Parish Priest for advice? Most of them are very good dancers themselves!

+ *Laurie Bradwell*