

The Bishop and the Grand Slalom

I am well aware that June has to be rated unseasonable for writing about the art of skiing. I have to admit, too, my total incompetence in this sport for



prudence has long since warned me: "It's not for you." The message came through loud and clear many years ago a few moments after a headlong plunge over a homemade jump left my anatomy totally immersed below the frozen surface of Lima's Spring Creek. My interest today, then, is that of a non-envious but admiring spectator of those who brave the slopes.

The analogy of the demanding race between poles known as the slalom comes to mind as I write about my role of leadership in the Church today — faced with the challenge of steering a successful course between the poles that mark the boundaries of diversity of opinion among us. The slalom is

known in ecclesiastical language as "Polarization".

It has been described as an intensive ideological and emotional separation over existential issues — the intensification of the problem of unity (staying on course) amidst diversity. I find that most people today are not separated over issues as issues — but over their own personal world whose life style has been challenged and threatened by issues. Those who seem most threatened in times of change are those who have attained a minimum of inner security born of faith and whose stability has depended on external props for keeping on course.

The II Vatican Council opened the Church to become swept into the world of the 70s — a world which had already become polarized because of the rapid social changes that we witness everywhere. The Church cannot separate herself from society, remain in splendid isolation and refuse to address herself to its needs. For an angry grace of the Holy Spirit has pushed her into the marketplace where the Church belongs as witness of the constant and therefore contemporary hope of the Gospel message.

The tension of vitality that accompanies this mission is a sign of growth and maturity. Just as a venturing forth from the security of a home is necessary for the growth of a child, so too in the life of the Church. For we will always be tempted to seek the security of the sanctuary — and shudder at the thought of facing the harsh reality of involvement in the social demands of the Gospel.

Polarization is an evil only if it divides us permanently and is unproductive. Aquinas preferred to call it schism — a sin against the love which is our common bond of unity and against the hope which allows the future to emerge.

It is good if it is temporary — for it is a sign of hope — of growth — struggle — of life reaching out for the new. No institution should be afraid of its future as long as there is activity and vitality — even though it is accompanied by the pain of temporary polarization. It would be a far worse fate to survive as static and irrelevant. The only location on earth where there is no conflict is the cemetery, and I have not been assigned to preside there.

Guest Columnist

Whither the Holy Spirit?

By Father John S. Hayes

These days of Pentecost provide a timely opportunity to seek out the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit directing and enlightening the Church today.



To know clearly the direction of development as the one endorsed by the Holy Spirit in these changing times is chancey. Yet anyone who wishes may study the auguries and view the drift set by the refreshing presence of new breezes blowing.

Scarcely noted in our local press is the change of direction discernible in our reading public. The National Catholic Re-

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porter, a journal long dedicated to baiting bishops including our own, has fallen upon hard times. Its circulation, once near an impressive 100,000 mark has been halved and its anti-authority founding editor has been dismissed. Such a portent might indicate a trend.

Likewise largely overlooked is the recent, quiet resolution of the Washington Case where forty fractious priests stood at loggerheads with their intransigent archbishop for two years. The sleight-of-hand of Cardinal John Wright is apparent in a solution that has left both sides claiming victory and moving on together in the work of the church.

Hans Kung, one of our severest critics, stresses the fact that no other church could possibly endure the "orderly revolution" proceeding in the Catholic Church today. Do we not explain that it is through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal Gifts that bind the church together?

The winds of change breezing in the church today bring a restoring joy to observers of the passing scene, especially to those with a sense of historical perspective.

Portents suggest that a "Second Spring" might at the moment be premature. But may one not hope that the Holy Spirit is searching for someone who can interpret the church and the times, the present position of Catholics, the development of dogma in the manner of John Henry Newman?

Editorial

Government at Fault for 'Leak'

Many issues are woven through the pattern of the dispute between the New York Times and the United States government. The major one, of course, is the freedom of the press versus the security of the nation.

The Times, while not always deserving of accolades, should be applauded in this case. It is performing as the free press should — in this instance trying to guarantee the public's right to know.

But there are more subtle questions involved as well. If it is to a nation's advantage to keep certain machinations from the public eye then that is the government's responsibility.

It would be naive to think that a nation could function without guarding some tactics from promulgation but the point here

is that it is the government's job to protect itself in this area.

It is therefore the government's fault that its maneuvers in this instance became public. More specifically the blame lies at the door of the Pentagon and not at the Times.

It hardly behooves the government at this juncture to try in any way to criticize the Times' motives as one official did by implication by tossing the phrase "headline value" into a statement.

Much criticism can be directed at the Times but headline-hunting can not be included. It is not in the "great gray lady's" repertoire.

Perhaps the most harm being done the nation by all this is a further erosion of the people's confidence in the government's war policy. Such sentiment has been

prevalent and has contributed more to the public discontent with the war than any other factor.

That only a certain few in executive positions knew about the Pentagon plans in question to escalate the war may be a pragmatic necessity but it doesn't sit well with a Congress that was already feeling bamboozled into approving such escalation.

It is particularly unappealing to a portion of the public already sure it has been hoodwinked and it will certainly have some effect on those who have been in the middle of the road concerning the war.

Those of the persuasion that the government has the right to keep stories out of the free press should be cognizant of what damage has been done by those governments who have been able to wield such authority.