

The Spirit of the Lord Fills Our World

PART III

Today the Church and the world are both in a time of severe crises, of religious, political, and economic revolutions. The relevance of Christianity to the world is severely challenged on all sides. The past sins of Christian people are bearing bad fruit while waves of bitterness rise up from young people and young nations in reaction to the old order. In this situation, Jesus along with the life of the Spirit is renewing the dramatic charisms of the Spirit — not only to build up the Church but to call attention to and communicate the good news of salvation.

To the Catholic Church of today, in the throes of renewal, the Lord Jesus has sent His blessings in many wonderful ways while challenging it to fuller life in Him. One of the things He is doing among His people is



making them more aware of the reality and power of His Holy Spirit. He is leading thousands of Catholics to experience, perhaps for the first time, the fruits of the Spirit in their own lives and in their relationships with the Father and with all men. Also experienced today, with many other good things, are the ministry gifts of the Spirit common in the New Testament Church. This outpouring, where it is received, is renewing the People of God. It is received by prayer in expectant faith that the Lord will renew in us His baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The dangers I see in this movement are not sufficient to overshadow its positive values. I feel the need for a theological direction to guide sincere souls in their journey with the Spirit in order to avoid extremes. Once a person is convinced that the Holy Spirit is a guide, either through the Scriptures or prophecy or any private communication, all argument must stop. But the groups admit one safeguard inherent to their meetings — the discernment of spirits — an admission that not all messages are from the Holy Spirit and

that another gift is necessary to discern the truth or fallacy of such communications.

If the movement is from God (and I have no reason to doubt it at the moment), it must be viewed in terms of many years. The humility of the Pentecostals might be a safeguard for now, but the future will demand men trained in theology to steer the Movement away from subjective illusions that could repeat the historical tragedy of the past: greater disunity among Christians, all in the name of the Holy Spirit and a Christ who said: "May they be one so that the world may come to believe that you sent me" (Jn. 17:21). Such a theological need is already being felt by many Pentecostal leaders.

Although I am cautious about spiritual gifts, I can accept the gifts of tongues, prophecy, interpretation and even healing that I find in these groups. In fact, I find it a strong and persuasive argument that these gifts are necessary in this neo-pagan age as they were among the early Christians who had to face the paganism of Rome.

Guest Columnist

A Saint for Our Times

By Father Francis Pegnam

Chesterton once said, "St. Thomas More will be more appreciated a hundred years from now than he is today". He is the saint of our times and the "Man for all Seasons". In every age a few brave men are willing to pay the price of principle. More was such a man.



All the things which society holds dear — wealth, honor, companionship of the high and mighty, material security — all these were his — and all these he sacrificed because to his own self he wished to be true.

Only one thing stood between him and signing that oath — and that was his con-

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science. He would not be false to his conscience no matter what it cost him; and it cost him much.

His chancellorship, the favor of the King and the comfort of his own home, were small things surely to this man in whom principle figured so largely that life itself was not too great a price to pay for its keeping.

There is need for St. Thomas More to be heard today. Our society seems willing to sacrifice, at every point along the way, personal integrity for expediency. Our society is giving increased evidence that it is concerned not so much with principle as it is with percentages. We are living in an age of Gallup polls, pilot projects; and the opinion

and judgments of men are being measured not so much by their rightness or wrongness as they are by the numbers that can be marshalled behind them. We have subscribed too many times in personal, political, literary and social matters to the fallacy of numbers.

There is a grave danger in making numbers and not truth itself the ground for holding this or that belief, this or that position. Numbers of themselves mean nothing. Let us not be deceived by them. Rightness or wrongness is not bound by mathematics, but by morals.

If there is only one left in the field to bear witness to the fact that it is right, then that single witness loses nothing for his being alone.

Therein is the genius of St. Thomas More and therein is his witness for our times.

Editorial

Hatred Blocks Civil Rights in North Ireland

The home-burnings, streetfights and sniper-murders in Northern Ireland offer a spectacle of hatred which has stunned the world. The scene is a venomous tangle of proud passions: the Protestant majority intends to keep the political power and economic clout they have held for generations; the Catholic minority demands an end of decades of discrimination in voting rights, job-security and housing; terrorists of the rebel Irish Republican Army have resolved to topple the London-controlled government and destroy the partition which has divided their land for 50 years.

It seems impossible that these hardened aims can be reconciled: all three groups demand unconditional submission to their goals. How can fears and furies heated by generations of religious prejudice be pacified without tearing the island apart?

The basic issue in contention in Northern Ireland is civil rights — the right of Catholics to have a vote that counts, the right to seek and keep a job of one's own

choice, the right to live in a decent house, the right of self-determination of government. The resemblance to the American civil rights crusade is clear: an oppressed and outnumbered people want a better life.

But the difference in the emotions accompanying the two uprisings is striking: color hatred in the U.S. was the root of the injustice which bred black bitterness; religious hatred in Northern Ireland has justified the repressions by which the Protestants have hobbled the Catholic population.

In the past 15 years our nation has painfully learned that injustice to black neighbors, condoned and legalized for many generations, eventually exploded into bloodshed. We discovered repression was not the answer: troops, guns, barricades and jailings did not silence the blacks' demands for justice. At the minimum we had to put on an opened mind, to concentrate on human values and abstract from color, to admit white failings and bravely to remove legal difficulties

which had denied that the black man is our brother.

The changing of minds in America over civil rights did not begin until violence wounded our image and gutted our ghettos. We learned that the black people had to be given new dignity. So too, minds have to be changed in Ireland. But honest efforts to exchange ideas, to rewrite laws and to honor a nation's pride for independence will come there only when reason and brotherhood prevail over religious prejudice. Pride, fear, greed and ignorance blinded our racial problem here; the same evils strangle the religious issue which divides the Irish.

What is happening in Ireland shows Americans many embarrassing views of themselves just a short while ago. Our civil rights difficulties are not so far behind us that we cannot learn more about respecting the rights of every neighbor to jobs, homes and education. Laws and guns will not change hearts: openness rather than repression is the path to social peace.