

GOOD NEWS

from IRELAND

By John M. Haffert

"Is your Christianity for export only?" someone asked an Irish missionary in the wake of murders among "Christians" of Belfast.

Last June 20th, a national peace pilgrimage gathered to face this question at the Shrine of the Queen of Ireland, in Knock. The principal speaker was Monsignor Desmond Mullan, administrator of the Cathedral in Derry, which is in the heart of the "religious war" area of Northern Ireland.

As an American not of Irish descent, I was deeply moved by Monsignor Desmond's talk. I suppose it was the most moving declaration of true Christianity I ever heard.

No Reprisals!

"A Christian can conquer an enemy in only one way," the Derry Cathedral Administrator said: "By making that enemy his friend."

Just a week before a child was killed in a bombing in Belfast. The mother pleaded:

"Let there be no reprisals! Let the death of my daughter contribute to Christian peace!"

"I myself believe that I never completely understood Christianity before," Msgr. Desmond said.

I recalled reading about a

Christian and a Moslem in Lebanon who, a few weeks before, had embraced one another sobbing over the mutual massacre of more than a hundred of their relatives and friends outside Beirut. They prayed sobbingly, in each other's arms, that God would enlighten the hearts of those who were inciting them to this senseless cycle of self-defense and reprisals that was destroying them.

Blessings for All

Msgr. Desmond's dramatic statement at Knock last June 20th suddenly makes us realize that out of the bloodshed of Northern Ireland is coming not only a deeper sense of Christianity among those who were *really* Christians in the first place, but a blessing of saints and martyrs which must bring ultimate graces not only to Ireland but upon us all. (And we pray that this is also to be the ultimate fruit of the Calvary in Lebanon!)

Two years from now Ireland will celebrate the centenary of the apparition in Knock of Our Lady, St. Joseph, and St. John (as a Bishop), with the Eucharistic Lord represented above them as the Lamb of God surrounded by adoring angels.

During this crisis of Christianity in the north, a magnificent Basilica has been built at Knock (largely by

Chesterton said: "*Christianity has never been tried and found wanting. It has never been tried.*"

But with step after step of Christian history, nations are finally beginning to *try* Christianity as a solution. And that is the great good news out of Ireland.

Catholics of the North) in honor of the Queen of Ireland. And there has been a new Protestant-Catholic examination of conscience in Ireland over the true meaning of Christianity and of their fraternal Christian objectives.

This is the news of Ireland that the world has NOT been hearing.

Only Bad Published

We heard of the death of the little girl in Belfast, but not of the mother's plea for no reprisals in the name of Christ...and the offering of her daughter's life on Calvary's altar, "that all may be one"! And we have had no idea of the growing number of people in Ireland who, as Msgr. Desmond said, have declared NATIONAL struggle, even for ideals as high as those of freedom and justice, as not worth achieving "if at the expense of our Christianity".

Monsignor Desmond Mullan also said that the people of Ireland must not be afraid to proclaim that it was our Christian intention to suffer rather than inflict suffering on others. He added that in praying for peace we did not pray for some magic political formula or maneuver nor a brilliant stroke of spacemanship, but we prayed only for a change of heart in ourselves and in our fellow-countrymen, that hearts of stone might be turned

into hearts of flesh by Christian love and forgiveness.

He pointed out that in the North of Ireland violence had made the headlines and filled the television screen, but less well publicized, but not less real, had been the quiet resurgence of Christianity — labels had been left aside. He said that there had been a growing

conviction throughout the North that people must come together in the name of Christ, and were it not for this Christian spirit in the vast majority of the people, there would have been a civil war long ago.

No Civil War!

Some become "reborn" Christians by a swift, consuming fire of love...a visitation of the Holy

Spirit. Some become "reborn" only in a crucible of suffering.

Rebirth!

But at this moment, there *IS* the beginning of a rebirth. There are signs that Christianity *IS* going to be tried to solve the problems of war and hunger and human strife.

And it will not be found wanting.

At the conclusion of the Peace Pilgrimage in Knock last June 20th, the Archbishop of Tuam led a prayer for peace... "that peace," said His Excellency, "promised to us at Fatima."

Following the peace rally, several Blue Army leaders of Ireland met in the sacristy of the Shrine of Knock, almost adjacent to the place of the apparition. I was privileged to address them. I said:

"Our Lady appeared here crowned as a Queen, with Saint Joseph and St. John. And at Fatima She said She would "Send Saint Joseph with the Child Jesus to bless the world and bring it peace"...a promise She kept during the miracle of the sun of October 13, 1917, when St. Joseph appeared with the Divine Child blessing the world from beside the whirling sun.

"May It Radiate..."

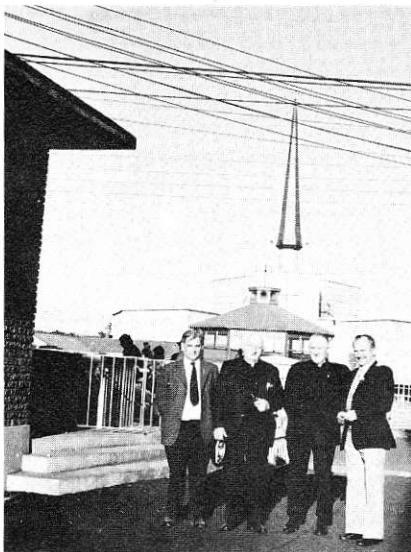
"Here at Knock St. Joseph appears in prayer, as does Our Lady. And it is Saint John...wearing the mitre of episcopal authority...who is speaking...holding a book which we take to be his gospel. And what can we imagine he is preaching other than the gospel of Love...the gospel of the Last Supper, as the Lamb appears above, surrounded by angels and bearing the empty cross?"

"May the Blue Army of Ireland not only be strong enough to bring the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart here, but may it radiate to all the world the mystic lesson of Knock...the lesson of the gospel of love taught by authority of the Church established by the Prince of Peace."

QUEEN of PEACE



Above: Partial view of the crowds at the Peace Pilgrimage at Knock, Ireland, last June 20th. New Basilica of the Queen of Ireland, just dedicated as this issue of SOUL went to press, is in background. It will accommodate about 10,000. In the left foreground is the original parish church where the apparition took place on August 21, 1879.



At left, photographed at Knock, are two Blue Army leaders of Ireland with their spiritual directors. Left to right: Dr. Thomas Smyth, of Co. Moynihan; Father Marius McAuliffe, O.F.M., internationally famous expert in mystic theology; Pastor Father Thomas Maguire; Joseph O'Reilly, Co. Cork. The first leader of the Blue Army in Ireland was Mrs. B. O'Riordan, of Galway, now assisted by her husband who is a retired school teacher. They all aspire to unity of spirit and work for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary...first in Ireland, and then the world!