

CHAPTER 4

A Vision Fulfilled

"Can these dead bones live?" (Ezekiel 137v1-14) Can these old benches at Eustace Street be alive again with people really worshipping the living God? Questions like these passed through my mind especially in 1972 when at a Quaker monthly meeting for business, it was discussed what to do with Eustace Street Meeting House which is really too large for the diminishing body of Friends (Quakers). I remember praying at this meeting that we would see the old meeting house full again with people praising God. Little did I know the wonder of the Lord's plan at that time.

The prayer meetings mentioned in Chapter 2 continued as expanding celebrations of joy and expectancy as more and more people experienced the release of God's Spirit within them. I think especially of a really radiant older nun testifying of how she had been a nun for thirty years and never really knew the Lord before. I think of a young Evangelical Church of Ireland Minister from the North of Ireland visiting the prayer meeting at U.C.D. Earlsfort Terrace (now part of the National Concert Hall building where the meeting had moved to from the Rosary Convent) and finding his heart touched by God's Spirit and a new awareness of his brothers and sisters in Christ who happened to be Roman Catholics. He went back to Queens University in Belfast and founded the prayer group there and later the Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor. Subsequently, Cecil Kerr has played a very large part in the development of the Charismatic meetings in Ireland and has been a blessing to many people. Fr. Richard Loherlin also arrived at these meetings and his previous experience in the Spirit was a help to the group. The Friday night meeting outgrew the room at UCD and moved to a convent in Mount Street from where, at my suggestion, it moved to the Quaker Meeting House at 6 Eustace Street. This started with

meetings of about one hundred and grew to the capacity of the hall (about 550-600). It reached its maximum of about eight hundred on the Friday night after the 1974 National Charismatic Conference. On this occasion the vestibule was full as well with people standing. After this, from a safety point of view, numbers had to be curtailed to the capacity of the room and often the doors were shut before the appointed starting time because of the large numbers desiring to attend. So it was that another prayer group, the Airport group, was started to relieve the pressure.

The meetings were an exciting mixture of praise, sharing what God was doing in people's lives, Scriptures, prayer, singing in the Spirit (tongues) and this often being followed by a very deep silence when a strong word from the Lord was spoken, this sometimes was an

Interpretation of a message given in tongues. I think of a homosexual who, as he was about to walk out of the meeting, was held back by a few words spoken in tongues by a Priest (who did not know what they meant). However, because this man knew the meaning of the words in Arabic, he stayed and was also blessed by the sharing of the story of Mary Magdalene. His life was changed from that night on and he turned his back on homosexual activity to serve the Lord.

Some of the joy and dynamic of these days is conveyed through the prophesy given by one of the leaders, Fr. Martin Tierney"yet I am pouring forth my joy and peace into your hearts. You are to be my people— a people of praise — a people of joy. I want you to gather together and not just have this joy in your hearts, but in your lips and in minds. I want this joy to radiate forth from you. I want it to be not something you keep for yourselves locked up, but it must spread forth from this place it must affect the whole country. It must be like a river of molten lead that spreads right throughout the whole country. It will take away all the distress and all the difficulty and all the destruction that there is in our land. You have my joy. I am pouring it forth into your hearts. You are my people, I am your God. Says the Lord."

Later on that same evening, after a testimony by Brendan Scanlon to the Lord solving an impossible business situation, another leader, Tom Flynn said; "Because you believe, others will know that I live. This is what is happening in a very real way here because people are witnessing to Christ and saying what He has done in their lives. The rest of us can then believe and that seems to me to be something that is very essential in all our lives. We do need to witness to the Lord by expressing and vocalising our Christianity and belief that God is with us. It is not just for ourselves but to share with one another as we are doing here. As we share, others will know that Christ lives. Not just our brothers and sisters, but others who don't even know Him will get to know Him through our knowledge of Him and what He has done for us. It seems to me that Christ spent a lot of time teaching the apostles to share. Other people caught what the apostles had by their living faith in Jesus — by the way they told them about the Lord who was alive and active. I think that is coming back to us in a special way in these days. Thank you, Lord for the way you are doing this. Thank you for showing us that you are alive. Help us Jesus, to always bear witness to you and speak about you when we can. Help us to show your life from what you have done for each one of us." (Para-phrased from tape of meeting, most meetings were taped in those days).

While meetings were, in general, unstructured, they were orderly. Only a few times was it necessary for the leaders to silence people by asking them to stop or just interjecting with another song. It was at these meetings too, that many of the present leaders around the country first tasted of the goodness of the Lord.

One visitor was Hector Crory and some of the men from the Belfast Chapter of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. What a change it was for these Protestants to experience the presence of God among so many Catholics. The opportunity later came for a return visit to Belfast and so Chris Rowe, Francis Hogan and I headed up to the frequently bombed Europa Hotel, Belfast. There, after Francis Hogan, a Catholic, spoke to a mainly Protestant audience, there was such a

presence of the Lord that the thought of it even now many years later brings a reverence and sense of the presence of the Lord to me.

I remember too, as a boy, reading of how the Exhibition Hall in Dublin was filled with people coming to hear the Evangelist, D.L. Moody. I wondered if I would see that hall full for the glory of God. Praise God, this too, has happened. At the National Charismatic Conferences several thousand people gathered in the exhibition halls of the Royal Dublin Society to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. It is hard to convey the joy and expectancy of those days. We were so freshly touched by God. His reality was ever present. It was a day of hope.