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Wherefore Art Thou Holy Ghost?

Ken Briggs | Mar. 12, 2013 NCR Today

The Holy Ghost must be peeved. In the avalanche of coverage of the papal sweepstakes, scarcely a mention of the Third Member of the Trinity shows up. It appears that the one who is supposed to be in charge can't even get a press conference.

The race to the top has become the Iowa caucuses, a stomping ground for ordinary political operatives promoting candidates and reporters calling the horse races. What's a Paraclete to do?

Proof of this snub is in the campaigners' pudding. It contains nothing of theological or ethical substance that the HG would find relevant. No vows to reconsider traditions or teachings or practices of faith. Instead, the scarlet knights of the church and their press hounds talk ward politics: How to clean up the political mess, shape up the bank and improve the sales pitch. Nothing about revamping the product ever comes up; only finding the right salesman to do a better job convincing the world that the old product works just fine. As the commercial says, "We don't make the product; we make the product better."

The storyline is that the Roman Catholic church needs someone at the helm who can put the swarm of crises behind it without changing a thing. No wonder the Holy Ghost has been edged out. That's the player who has been credited, at least, with leading Christians on a pilgrimage to something better, not rubber-stamping the past. But the job description has apparently changed and a Holy Challenger dispensing "signs of the times" is no longer considered necessary. The ideal candidate has been deemed to be a top notch manager, and a first rate persuader and an ace politician. Making substantive moves isn't something that seems to come up.

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