

05/24/15 Pentecost B

-- Recent research studies have been pointing to the fact that more and more people—especially younger people—are joining the ranks of the NONES. That's not religious sisters, but those who profess no religion.

-- This affects not just Catholics or mainline Christians but most religious groups. In the midst of all this, we celebrate this feast of Pentecost, of the presence of the Holy Spirit with God's people. And we often wonder whether the Spirit is really alive.

-- As an example, this week Cardinal Dolan, who spoke to our conference, told of attending a bar-mitzvah in New York, invited by a rabbi. It was a splendid service, and the young man recited his Hebrew.

-- The cardinal remarked to the rabbi how meaningful this was. And the rabbi replied, *We probably won't see this boy at the synagogue again until his son celebrates his bar-mitzvah.* (Similar to Confirmation)

-- Yes, it's easy to wonder whether the Holy Spirit is working today. But there are two other incidents this past week that assure me that the Holy Spirit is still working.

-- I met Jordan, a young woman at the conference who was originally from Indianapolis. She'd gone to Georgetown and, while an undergraduate, became interested in her own Catholic faith and other faiths.

-- After graduating, she stayed there as a Research Fellow. She works for the Br_dge Initiative. Their mission is to promote interreligious understanding and, in particular, to address fear of Islam in our country. Her enthusiasm and intelligence struck me as the work of the Spirit.

-- Another was meeting a Vietnamese priest from the Diocese of Orange (California). He'd come over with his family as an infant and had grown up to become a lawyer. But he felt something was missing in his life.

-- When he was 36, someone suggested he look at priesthood. That was the first time he thought about it, but he began to investigate seminary and soon was signing up.

-- He was ordained four years ago after studying in Rome and concentrating on ecumenical and interreligious work. He will now be at the cathedral parish (former Crystal Cathedral of Robert Schuller) where Masses are celebrated in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. He will continue his work for unity in the Church and among peoples.

-- These two people showed me the work of the Spirit. But it's not primarily in their human talents. God is working in them. And, in fact, God is working in all of us. This is God's work, not ours.

-- At Pentecost, the Spirit worked so that people of different languages and cultures could understand the apostles. The story of the tower of Babel was reversed.

-- But it was not reversed by everyone speaking the same language. No, people with different languages could now understand one another. The Spirit brought people together.

-- The Holy Spirit continues to work where people put their efforts into greater understanding and unity among peoples of different cultures, religious persuasions and practices. I saw much of that this past week.

-- But we don't need to be a part of national meetings to see that work. It continues wherever people come together for greater understanding. It happens when families work to resolve conflicts and nurture their love for each other. It takes place when we reach out to the poor and needy.

-- Yes, we can't be blind to the rise of unbelief and individualism in our society. But we should not be blind, either, to the opportunities to nurture the work of the Holy Spirit.

-- For, in fact, God's spirit is present in all of us through our baptism and confirmation. The more we really believe that, the more we are likely to be a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence to the people around us.