

2008

Last spring, after serving you for twelve years as pastor, I left St. Ann's for a six month sabbatical. Two weeks ago, I returned after spending five months in a Spanish language and culture immersion program at the Maryknoll Language Institute in Cochabamba, Bolivia. As I meditate on the meaning of Christmas, I want to share an experience I had in Bolivia.

While the staff of the Institute remains relatively stable, the students come and go for varying lengths of time. After I was there about a month we had a Friday night social since earlier that week about 20 new students arrived for their five-month session.

During the party I was deeply struck by the palpably positive spirit in the room. There were people of varying ages and stages of life, people from Korea, Italy, Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Holland, Australia, Canada, the USA and several more nations. We did not speak the same languages, yet there was a oneness in that moment and place.

I said to a young man from Boston how remarkable and powerful I found the spirit in that room to be---as if the Spirit were the biggest and most impressive person in the room. He responded, "Sure, everyone here has chosen to leave their comfort zone in the service of God."

We celebrate today the revelation that God has chosen to leave His comfort zone in the service of you and me and all creation which he has made "subject to futility" (Romans 8:20). In so doing the Father has graced us to taste of the Spirit who is a Divine Person through the presence and action of his Son whose incarnation we celebrate this day.

May we be moved beyond our comfort zones in response. Merry Christmas!