

DC's Red Mass

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 7, 2013 | Distinctly Catholic

The annual Red Mass in Washington, D.C. was held yesterday, as always, on the Sunday preceding the start of the Supreme Court's term. Bishop Kevin Farrell of Dallas gave the homily in which he retold the story of the Tower of Babel and contrasted it with the story of Pentecost. He went on to say:

I am not the first person to comment that we seem to live at a time of highly polarized and polarizing rhetoric. In that sense, today, we are more Babel than Pentecost, we are more about confusion than wisdom, more separated in and by rhetoric than united. Among the things that we celebrate at this Mass today is the countercultural reality of God's very spirit hovering over us as it did at the beginning of Genesis to create clarity out of chaos, and, as the Holy Spirit did at the first Pentecost, he now bestows wisdom, clarity, insight and, yes, unity. Please notice that I did not say uniformity. I deliberately said unity because the Holy Spirit is the source of unity on all that matters and the source of variety in and among the difference we have that make us who we are.

Bishop Farrell also added, "If honest and respectful dialogue means anything, it means that we need to strike a balance in our words and rhetoric so that conviction should never become stridency and saying things with commitment should never become caricaturing anyone else's positions or beliefs."

At the brunch following the Mass, Cardinal Wuerl spoke movingly about Pope Francis and the experience of the conclave. It was obvious to all how thrilled +Wuerl is by the new pope as he recalled being approached by a young boy after the conclave who said to him: "You are a cardinal, right? You did good."

Perhaps the most interesting thing about yesterday's Red Mass and brunch was the thing that was not said. Two words went unmentioned: religious liberty. There was not a whiff of culture warrior talk in the day's proceedings, no condemnation of the Supreme Court's decisions in the same sex marriage cases, no please for the HHS mandate to be ruled unconstitutional. Instead, modeling Pope Francis, both +Farrell and +Wuerl spoke about the Gospel and left the politics outside. It was so refreshing.

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