

Pentecost, the festival celebrating the work of the Spirit in Jerusalem in the first days of the Christian church, falls this year on June 4. The day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 tells of the Spirit overcoming barriers of geography and language; so many churches this year on Pentecost will affirm the immigrants in our midst, at a time when many fear and attack the immigrants among us. (Some observers tell us that in the United States, because many immigrants come from predominantly Christian Latin America, Christians are a larger proportion of immigrants than of the US population as a whole.)

May 26 to June 25 Muslims will observe Ramadan, to remember the time their tradition says God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad. Like Jewish Passover and Christian Lent, Ramadan is based on a lunar calendar, so the dates of Ramadan vary from year to year. During Ramadan, faithful Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset; *iftar* is the name of the evening meal that breaks the fast.

For several years now, Muslims in my state have used the *iftar* as an occasion to share their faith. Many mosques at some point in Ramadan have an evening when visitors may hear a presentation about Islam and Ramadan, have a question-and-answer time, observe the short prayer time at sunset, and then join Muslims in their *iftar* meal. While many Christians may have questions about the usual separation of sexes in worship, we may also gain a sense of worship from the Muslim custom of removing shoes before worship.

Christians believe we have in Jesus a unique window to God, but Christians differ on whether we are to work for the conversion of persons of other faiths to faith in Jesus. However, I think we can agree that God wishes us to know more about the faith of our neighbors. (Moravian Theological Seminary has Muslim students who just want to know more about Christian faith.) In order to invite others to Jesus and his way of life, we need to know our neighbors and in some way have earned the right to be heard. In my state, some Christians have practiced vandalism toward non-Christian places of worship and physically assaulted individuals they think are not Christian. This makes it difficult for any Christian to feel he or she has a right to be heard.

Do we as Christian congregations ever have occasions when we try to introduce non-Christian neighbors to the essentials of our Christian faith, when we try to share basic understanding of the way of life of followers of Jesus?

Jesus, our conquering Lamb, as you gently invited your first disciples, "Follow me," may we gently invite others to follow you, on a way of life marked by hospitality, humility, and service. Amen.

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