

## **Speak Heavenly Language: Peace**

When I came to America from Kenya, I knew other languages that are spoken in Kenya. In school, we learned British English. After landing in America, I soon realized that even though I had learned English, it was not American English. So, I arrived in a country where English is spoken only to be shocked to find it was a different English, with new words and different pronunciations. Besides this language shock, I also had an accent, which I still have as characteristic of my original upbringing and mother tongue.

An example of my linguistic challenge is that in British English one can say garbage, while in American English we say trash. One can say a parish priest in British English, and in America the term is pastor. In British English one can say a lift, and in America one says elevator. You get the idea. I am still learning American English even after being here for some years. The people who are not aware of these differences and challenges, when they hear a foreigner speak using different terminology for what they know by different words, or when they hear them speak English with a different accent, may wonder whether they even know English.

The Church, present on earth as a foreigner, faces the same dilemma of language conflict. Christianity is about heavenly things, the Kingdom of heaven, of what is above, speaking the language of God, peace spoken in words of love, mercy, unity with the accent of the Holy Spirit. In light of this higher language, we hear the Scripture tell us, “The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony...For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit” (John 3:31-36).

The Church faces rejection and opposition on earth, not because she has done something wrong, but simply because she speaks a language of heaven on earth, in words and accents the earthly are not familiar with and are unwilling to learn or accept. Those on earth listen to the Church speak her spirit filled language of love, mercy and peace and they call it a foreign language simply because she is not willing to lose the accent of God and begin to speak the accent of earth where intelligence in any human field is measured on earthly standards incapable of rising above the visible material world which is passing by.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the body Church, was rejected and crucified on earth because he brought into the world a new language that the world was not ready to learn, the language of forgiveness, love, unity, and peace. The world wanted him to abandon his heavenly heritage and become fully a man of the earth, only a poor man from Nazareth, a son of a carpenter and his wife, Joseph

and Mary. And since he decided to do the will of the Father not to please man but God, he was nailed to the cross, for the people of the earth tend not to accept those who do not speak the same language or share the same worldview.

The Church on earth, her leaders and the faithful, will always face rejection and opposition on earth, especially when they choose to speak the language of God and strive to live by the Spirit of the Gospel, the Spirit of peace, according to the heavenly model on earth.

In the world, Christians will continue to hear this warning: “We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name” (of Jesus Christ). What should our response be? With St. Peter, the father of the Christian family, a family in which we belong as the people who have received the gift of resurrection, the gift of peace, a people sent to proclaim the Gospel truth of the power of God on earth, mercy, and forgiveness. We, too, must say with St. Peter, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27-33).

Even as the institutional rejection of the higher language of the Church increases, so, we must note, a movement of rejection of the institution and toward the Spirit of the Gospel and the Spirit of peace. Dioceses throughout America are reporting record numbers of conversions by people from all faiths and all walks of life who seek to hear, learn, and experience that better language. They come yearning for the hope, unity, forgiveness, and universality of the Gospel language that no institution can silence. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.” (John 14:27)

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