

January 1, 2013

Dear Bobit,

A Peaceful New Year!

I like that forwarded article on language. The author's theory on the disappearance of language is seemingly confirmed here in Mindanao, especially Davao, where the beautiful Cebuano Language is fast disappearing and being replaced by a distorted Tagalog language. When I came here 37 years ago you could Cebuano everywhere except among the RVM Sisters who were mostly from Luzon. Now even unlettered Bol-anons and Ilonggos speak Cebuanized and distorted Tagalog.

I once wrote a column on this lamentable cultural phenomenon which is influenced by media. My purpose was to usher in a reversal of this trend by strongly encouraging our Clergy, Religious and Laity to use correct Cebuano especially in the Liturgy of the Mass and the Sacraments as well as the homily. I gave the same advice on the use of English and Tagalog.

Aside from referring to the richness of the Cebuano language in poetry, drama, music, ballads, novels and history, I encouraged the use of Cebuano in all the parts of liturgical celebration, that is, the liturgical texts, hymns, introductions, canticles, responses and responsories, homilies and blessings. The same goes for liturgical rites in English or Tagalog.

The reason is to allow the priest presider and the worshipping community to internalize the mysteries being celebrated. These mysteries are brought to one's consciousness by language. If the language is the same and consistently used throughout the celebration, a sense of wonder and delight is evoked when mystery is experienced through linguistic signs, movements, gestures and symbols. As a result worshipers come away edified, awed, warmed by the mysterious Presence of God. But if Cebuano is mixed English and Tagalog the process of internalization is interrupted, the mystery is not experienced, and the worshiper comes away merely entertained if not dissatisfied.

I think it is about time we started a counter cultural movement: a revival of the Cebuano language. I am thinking of a symposium where you and I and that UP professor are the speakers. How feasible is that I don't know.

A Peaceful New Year!

Archbishop Capalla