

LETTER OF THE DAY

Religious leaders should choose courage, not comfort

There is a question that refuses to go away: why would the most powerful political power in the world attack a man with no armies, no grand investments, no weapons?

The answer is disarmingly simple. Because he spoke.

When Pope Leo XIV called for an end to war, he did not deploy strategy or ideology.

He named a truth: too many are dying - too many children, too many innocents. He insisted that another path is possible, that someone must rise and say so.

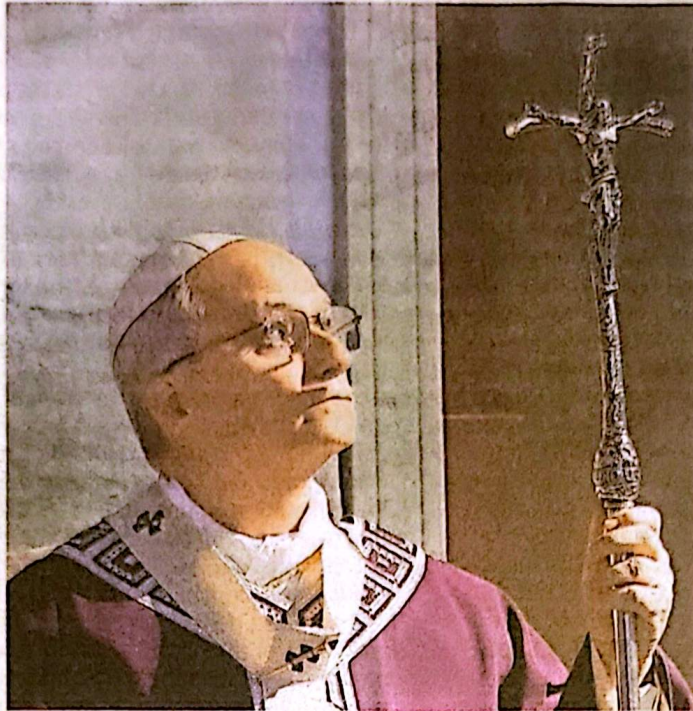
In doing this, he touched a nerve that power often seeks to silence - the Gospel.

The Gospel has always been unsettling. It disrupts comfortable arrangements. It places at the centre, those whom power prefers to push to the margins: the poor, the migrants, the child without a home, the forgotten victim of violence.

That is why the words: "I have no fear" resonate far beyond any political exchange. They are not merely a response to a president; they are the declaration of a soul rooted in truth.

Pope Leo does not speak to power. He speaks past it. His true interlocutors are not systems or institutions, but the suffering: the migrant turned away, the child buried under rubble, the poor who die unheard. His voice may unsettle the powerful, but it liberates those who suffer in silence.

This is not new. The Christian tradition has long understood that silence, too, can be a moral failure. As St Gregory the Great reminds shepherds, 'there is a time to speak and a time to keep silent, but woe to the shepherd who remains silent when truth demands a voice'. Silence, in the face of injustice, is not neutrality; it is complicity.



And yet today, one of the great tragedies of the Church is precisely this: the weakening of the prophetic spirit. Too many religious leaders have learned to measure their words, to soften their tone, to protect their positions. There is a growing fear of being disliked, misunderstood, or rejected. But the prophetic vocation has never been about comfort or approval.

The prophet does not exist to please; he exists to awaken.

As Isaiah warned, there will always be those who say: "Speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions" (Isaiah 30:10). The temptation to offer soothing words instead of unsettling truths is real. But the prophet is not a political agitator; he is, in the deepest sense, a divine troubler. He disturbs a false peace, unsettles the comfortable, and brings consolation to the afflicted.

This is why the warning of Ezekiel remains urgent: "If you do not speak to dissuade the wicked

from his ways... I will hold you accountable" (Ezekiel 3:19). Silence has consequences, not only for those who suffer, but for those who could have spoken.

The reality in many parts of the world, including Uganda, makes this silence even more troubling. We have witnessed wars that displace entire communities, leaving families scattered and futures uncertain. We have seen the horror of abductions and the unresolved questions surrounding political prisoners.

Corruption continues to drain resources meant for the common good, while the manipulation of elections undermines the very foundation of democracy. Nepotism suffocates opportunity, rewarding loyalty over competence and entrenching cycles of injustice.

In the face of such realities, can the Church afford to remain cautious? For too long, the Church has stood at the shore, watching as

the poor and the socially disinherited struggle in the waters. But this is not a call for reckless immersion, nor for the Church to lose itself in the chaos it seeks to address.

It is a call for courage: to enter the world as it is, without disguising its wounds, without coating injustice with a thin veneer of religious language.

The mission of the priest, of the bishop, of every religious leader, is fundamentally prophetic. It is to stir a sleeping conscience, even when that awakening is unwelcome. It is to name evil, even when doing so comes at a cost. It is to stand where Christ stands that is among the wounded, the excluded, the voiceless.

"I have no fear" must become more than a phrase. It must become a stance.

Not a defiance rooted in pride, but a freedom of one who knows his origin and his destiny. The freedom of one who understands that truth does not depend on approval.

The world does not need more cautious voices. It needs courageous ones. It needs shepherds who know when silence betrays the Gospel and when speech becomes an act of love. It needs leaders willing to risk misunderstanding in order to remain faithful.

Pope Leo XIV has shown the way not by power, but by witness. The question now is whether others will follow.

Will religious leaders continue to guard their positions, or will they reclaim their prophetic voice? Will they choose comfort, or courage?

Because in the end, the most powerful words are not those that dominate, but those that liberate.

And today, more than ever, the Church must dare to say: I have no fear.

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