Treat the name of Jesus with respect: Bishop Boyce

By *Sarah Mac Donald* - 19 January, 2015

If the name of Jesus is used over the airwaves in a reckless manner, an apology is expected, bishop of Raphoe warns.

The Bishop of Raphoe has criticised the frequency and careless way people use the Name of Jesus calling for it to be treated with greater respect.

In a homily, Bishop Philip Boyce said it is “sad” to hear the Name of Jesus being used unheedingly, “at times as a curse instead of a blessing, in uncultured and rough language”.

He strongly criticised its use in public as “offensive” and added, “If used over the airwaves in a reckless manner, a person would have to apologise”.

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The bishop warned that the words and the names we use are important. “We honour a person if we use his name with respect.”

He explained that to say that bad language is only words, and that they mean nothing, is not true.

“The disrespectful use of a name dishonours another person,” he said. “To honour the Holy Name is to honour Jesus; to profane his Name is to offend the Lord himself.”

Referring to Scripture, he recalled that when the Apostles were beaten and then released from prison, Scripture said “they left the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the *name*” (Acts 5: 41).

“They had preached Christ and his message. They suffered on account of his Name, that is, on account of Christ Jesus himself.”

Elsewhere in his homily, Bishop Boyce said that all religions honour the sacred name of their God and hold it in veneration.

The Jews regarded the name of the God who revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai as a name that was so exalted that it was not to be pronounced, and they began to use a different name, Adonai, meaning Lord.

He added that Muslims do not allow the name of their great prophet, Mohammed, to be profaned in any way.

The bishop also referred to the Commandments which prescribes respect for God's name: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Ex. 20:7).

"This commandment governs our use of speech in sacred matters and forbids every improper use of the names of God, of Jesus, of Our Lady and the Saints," he warned.

He said the Catechism also tells the faithful that deliberately to use the name of God or of Jesus with hatred and reproach is to sin gravely.

"Irreverence for God and his Holy Name and for sacred matters is at times present in certain sectors of society. This is embarrassing and painful for believers but not merely for them. "People of goodwill can be as dismayed as men and women of faith at the departures from decency in speech and the disregard for the holiness of God's Name" (*Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults* , p. 392)."

The bishop underlined that Christians, too, should keep holy the Name of Jesus, the Son of God, and not use it in a heedless or offensive manner or as an expression of anger or hatred, or simply to emphasise a point.

"For some people it becomes a habit, so that they no longer notice that they are taking the Name of Jesus in vain. And, yet, they are not completely unaware of the words they use, for if a priest happens to come into the company, you could hear them say; 'Excuse the language, Father'. But it is with the Lord himself they should excuse themselves and from him ask pardon."

Dr Boyce highlighted that in the prayer taught to us by Jesus himself, the first petition addressed to God is one that asks God's name to be kept holy: 'Hallowed by thy Name'. This is a very reverent and discreet way of asking God to make sure that his holy name is not profaned by us. We have to do our own part by maintaining deep respect for the Name of Jesus, and using it as a prayer rather than a curse."