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SPEAKING YOUR LANGUAGE

One of the challenges of my work is the need to interview folks in Quebec. A few years back...well, actually, about five decades back...I was fluent in the French language. I spoke it well, read it well and thoroughly enjoyed impressing my mom with my ability to read cereal descriptions and in-box promotions *en français*. My conversational skills came to a screeching halt after I married into a German-speaking family and I learned to chatter in that vernacular. This past winter I decided it was time to pull up my linguistic socks and re-gain my ability to converse in Canada's other official language. Even though I still read it fairly well, re-gaining my conversational skills will take determination and, ideally, situations where I would be forced to speak only French.

That experience has made me more conscious of the challenges faced by non-English speaking folk who come to our country, in whatever capacity. The simplest tasks become monumental barriers when you can't express what you need or want to say. Business transactions, asking for directions, describing symptoms in a medical setting – all matters of frustration and sometimes, heartache for them and yet all things that those of us who are fluent in the vocabulary simply take for granted.

And yet there are feelings no language can fully express: joy in knowing that our grandchild is due any day; sorrow in hearing of the death of a loved one; fear in facing any number of difficult situations...and the list goes on. How good to know that there is a God in heaven who knows and understands even those things that we find inexpressible.

"Great is the Lord and mighty in power," wrote the unknown Psalmist. "His understanding is infinite." (Psalm 147:5)

Need a listening ear and a compassionate heart? God offers both in any language.