

I love the Panera Restaurant and Bakery. The food is delicious and healthy and you get a good feeling just stepping into the place.

Before Thanksgiving I decided to go to the local Panera with my wife for lunch. They had some delicious selections including tempting Sierra Turkey Sandwich, Asiago Steak Sandwich, and the Frontega Chicken Sandwich.

But the one that stood out to me, especially during the Thanksgiving season, was the Turkey Cranberry Flatbread Sandwich. It's described on the menu as:

"Tender strips of all-natural, slow roasted turkey layered with a garlic and herb cheese spread, zesty cranberry mostarda and fresh spinach served grilled on freshly baked flatbread."

Mmmmm How can you resist that.

The young lady behind the counter, I would guess she was about 18 years old, took my order and then said something like:

"Soyouwouldliketurkeycranberryflatbreadnotsierraturkeysandwichor chickenflatbread?withchipsor-apple"?

I stood there for a moment trying to process what she had said.

My brain first turned on the psychiatrist in me wondering if this young person had the pressured or cluttered speech associated with Bipolar Disorder.

Then my more biblical side turned on and I thought of Genesis Chapter 11, the story of the Tower of Babel :

"(God said) let us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech."

But I didn't think this situation at Panera really had anything to do with man's sinfulness.

Then I thought, What about the second chapter of Acts describing the day of Pentecost :

“All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.”

Once again I thought No; this doesn't have to do with speaking in tongues either.

So, I asked the young lady to repeat what she said; she looked a bit perplex but said it slower; and I affirmed I wanted the turkey cranberry flatbread. Then I asked her “Do you have any diet cola?” She looked at me, again with that somewhat perplexed countenance and said “Cola?” I said, “Yeah; like Coke or Pepsi.” “Oh sure,” she replied cheerfully, “it's over there.”

Then I understood: it was simply a matter of failure to communicate. Just like Paul Newman in Good Hand Luke. Except the core of the problem was one of generational divide.

I wish I could blame it on the digital age ruining the youth of our day but probably the problem is more of my just getting older.

So, I will still go to Panera in the future — but next time I may take one of my grandkids to translate for me.