

When Ordering People Becomes the Norm

Union of Saints

There's a strange culture growing online **today** — one where people don't talk *with* each other anymore, they talk *at* each other. It's become normal to "**order**" strangers around: *Delete that. Stop saying this. You're wrong. Do better.* Instead of healthy conversation, it feels like everyone is a drill sergeant shouting commands.

But history shows us where that mindset leads. In **World War II**, entire populations were conditioned to obey orders without question. People became numbers, not human beings. That culture of command crushed individuality, silenced dissent, and weaponized obedience. Now, in a quieter but no less dangerous way, we see the echoes of it online. The tools are different, but the energy is the same: dehumanize, dominate, demand.

Here's the truth: it takes emotional intelligence to have a healthy conversation. It takes listening without planning your attack. It takes empathy to hear the pain or fear behind someone else's words. It takes humility to admit when we might be wrong. None of these qualities thrive in the culture of ordering.

And so anger spills out. People rage at each other in comment sections, not because disagreement is evil, but because we've forgotten how to disagree without trying to destroy.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We can choose a better culture, one built on dialogue instead of commands. That means:

- **Listening first.** Slowing down before typing, asking what someone really means.
- **Naming the behavior, not attacking the person.** Saying, "*That came across harsh*" instead of "*You're toxic.*"
- **Building safe spaces for dialogue.** Creating environments where different perspectives sharpen us instead of shaming us.
- **Choosing peace.** Sometimes silence or curiosity is stronger than firing back.

World War II taught us the **danger** of blind obedience. The digital age is teaching us the danger of blind outrage. Both turn people into objects. Both dehumanize.

And if we want to stop repeating history in new forms, we need to remember this: **people aren't soldiers waiting for our orders.** They're **human beings** waiting to be understood.