

"Ephpheta."

From Saint Mark we take the following New Year's lesson:

"They brought to Him one deaf and dumb; and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, He groaned, and said to him: Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right." -- Mark, 6:6.

Set a blind man in the midst of a paradise of delights, or a deaf man in the midst of heavenly melodies; you have wasted a beautiful panorama, you have made void a celestial symphony. Set an idiot at the feet of St. Thomas, or a carnal brute at the feet of St. Bonaventure; you waste divine reasoning, you quench the flame of divine love.

"Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you." -- Matt., 7:6.

You are returning today from a journey into the world where you have found friends and enemies. Among friends you have found a precious appreciation of your school and the principles it represents -- and perhaps you have learned from these friends that the things you find at Notre Dame are more worth while than you had imagined. Among enemies you have learned that "the servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you."

But have your eyes and ears been opened to understand the things you are taught at Notre Dame? Have you had a real appreciation of the atmosphere of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and of loyalty to the Blessed Mother of God? Has your conduct been based on the remembrance that it will profit you nothing to gain the whole world if you suffer the loss of your soul?

There are still those who are blind and deaf and dumb. There are those whose conception of Christmas was as pagan as that of any old Roman who celebrated the feast of Saturn with drunken orgies; there are those who were in no condition to hear Mass on New Year's morning; there are those who have planned "parties" for tonight and tomorrow night.

When you were baptized, the priest touched your ear and said: "Ephpheta, quod est, Adaperire." "Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened." And the Catholic Church prayed that your ears would be opened to hear the word of God; that you be not like the idols of the gentiles, of which David sang: "They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not: they have ears and hear not." Ps., 115:6,7.

And our New Year's wish to you is that this prayer of the Catholic Church be fruitful. No matter that you have been blind and deaf and dumb until this day and hour. You must have learned during your contact with the world during the Christmas holidays that Catholics love and appreciate the things that Notre Dame represents, and envy you the chance that is yours; and that those who hate the Catholic Church -- their name is legion -- hate your school and all that it represents. You may have heard what we have heard; you may have seen what we have seen -- one attempt after another to explain away the success of Notre Dame; here a wish and there a plot to drag her name in the dust.

As long as you have freely associated yourself with this school, be man enough to be its friend and not its enemy. To be its friend you must take full advantage of its spiritual opportunities, you must show in your life the fruits one must expect of Catholic education. And that is why our New Year's wish to you is "Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened." May your eyes be opened to see the things of God at Notre Dame, may your ears be opened to hear and understand the word of God, may your hearts be opened to sing the praise of God -- both here and in eternity.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY tomorrow. It commemorates Christ's manifestation to us, the Gentiles. Receive Holy Communion and ask God's Blessing on the New Year.