

Blessing of Throats in  
Sacred Heart Church to-  
night after the Novena.

University of Notre Dame

Religious Bulletin  
February 3, 1956  
-----

A Good Resolution

Tomorrow -- First Saturday  
of the month. Fatima Devo-  
tions in private.

We think of New Year's Day as an occasion for resolutions -- an invitation to wipe clean the slate of the past, and write a better life history for the future. If exams kept you too busy to think about resolutions, start with the new semester. We suggest one in particular -- one eminently in order:

Scriptural scholars attest that the word "Jesus" means one who saves. Christ's mission was precisely that. Salvation and redemption are thus capsuled into Christ's very name. Hence, the name should stand for a mission of love, of making people holy, of lifting them toward God.

But profanity and blasphemy are the negation, the contradiction, the turning wrong side out, of the meaning of the word, Jesus. Reverence and respect, and blessing, are of the very essence of the word -- and yet it is used for cursing. It is perverted by being employed to call down maledictions, or at least to express a bad kind of anger. Sometimes the devil is called the "Ape of God" -- not in the sense that he imitates God, but that he mocks God and the things of God. The devil turns things around so that they are used not for their right purpose, but for a contrary purpose. Cursing originated with the devil; it's his form of expression.

Speech itself is a gift of God, given to man for a specific purpose -- that he should give honor and glory and gratitude to God. Profanity and blasphemy are excellent examples of the misuse of one of God's gifts -- almost like taking God's gift and hurling it back into God's Face to insult Him.

Even among pagans a vulgar tongue is regarded as uncouth. It signals a lack of refinement. And on the intellectual level its use betrays a woeful lack of vocabulary. A curse is an "omnibus" word -- a cover-up for the owner's intellectual poverty. Among the unlearned, vulgar words are regarded as a badge of distinction, a sign of daring -- but only in the mental slums where similar minds are not so inventive. To be regarded as a man of distinction because of this flair for mental garbage is small honor, indeed!

The use of profanity, incidentally, is also a sign of mental laziness -- it saves us the trouble of thinking -- of using our minds to search out the vocabulary required to express precise shades of meaning, and to express strong emotions. There is no distinction worthy of the name attached to the foul mouth of university caliber.

Profanity is also a little stupid -- it doesn't help one whit, but only harms you, and labels you as irreverent on the spiritual level; uncouth and unrefined on the social scene; and dumb on the intellectual front. A man addicted to cursing and swearing does not flatter himself at all. He may be a king among morons -- but that is hardly a mark of distinction, either.

We should be grateful for the gift of speech; we should be grateful, too, for our Redemption and Salvation. And being grateful, we can hardly misuse the Holy Name that calls for thankfulness, and adoration, and repentance, and love for God.

You'll be making resolutions as you start off the new semester. We suggest that you make this one: To use the Name of God with reverence. Blessed Thomas a Kempis says that if we were to eradicate one fault a year, we should soon be perfect men. A victory over an unruly, or vulgar, or profane tongue is no small achievement.

-----  
PRAYERS - Deceased: friend of Bob Muhlbaugh (Law); sister of Fr. Devers, CSC; Fr. Kevin Cronin, OSB; Augustine Pall. Ill: grandfather of John Gaido of Alumni; father of Rev. Richard Sullivan, CSC; mother of Joe Norton of Pangborn.