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All creation teaches us some way of prayer.

Thomas Merton

# The Tongue—

## A Restless Evil



by Nicholas Ayo c.s.r

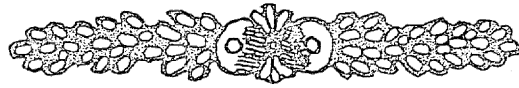
These words reflect on the issue of offensive language on campus. I should not want to sound like I am a self-appointed scold. Nor would I want anyone, particularly outsiders, to misunderstand. Notre Dame is an especially graced community. I also do not wish to imply that offensive language is a problem for everyone, nor do I address what people might say in exceptional circumstances. I am

concerned only with what anyone can hear in the corridors of our buildings and the sidewalks of our campus.

We all complain when we inhale the ethanol fumes over South Bend. We ask why a small group has a right to pollute the air that we all must breathe. Does the Notre Dame community have a similar right to clean sound? Is there a grossness in speech that is offensive as obscenity in dress?



I find two kinds of speech offensive: (1) References to God or to Jesus Christ, whom this community loves, when the name is used as an expletive in anger or disgust. I have always thought people should not say anything about another person that they would not say to that person's face. Do we not dull religious sensitivity by taking God casually, or taking God's name in gross contexts and mindlessly? (2) References to the sexual intercourse of man and woman, which we hold to be either sacred when informed by love, or criminal when imposed by violence. Is it not strange that we take love-making as our model for wishing to dismiss someone? We deplore pornography, but we readily speak in the crude language of bodily invasion with intent to hurt.



At Notre Dame I admire men who tell it like it is, who have courage and gender, and who show no fear of what others think. I also admire women who are equally confident and assertive in any conversation. I admire frank speech. But I do not enjoy obscenities and I find them boring. Having so impoverished a vocabulary at a University? Is serendipitous speech unimagined, and the piquant phrase unspoken?

Would it not be better if we could find a more nuanced vocabulary, and be thoughtful of how our public utterance may offend others who must listen to us? Would we not have a better image of God if we kept his name revered, and of lovemaking if we kept this image intact? Would we not be both more Christian and more wise if we chose speech for the welfare of those around us?



I do not think language is prescriptive. Neither I nor anyone else is qualified to say these words are bad. Cultures differ. All words are good. In a movie, many of the words I find offensive might in the context be appropriate. But, I am opposed to dumping offensive language on the public ear, as once the householders of city streets used cobblestones below their windows for a general disposal, through which everyone had to pick his or her way.

"For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue--a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so." (James 3:7-10)



With it we curse men

who are made in the likeness of God.

From the same mouth come blessing and curse...

# SUMMER SERVICE PROJECTS

Notre Dame Alumni Clubs across the country will sponsor N.D. students in Summer Service Projects (SSP) again this year. Students who are selected to participate in the SSP spend eight weeks during the summer working in a service project which is developed according to three factors: 1) the needs of the local community, 2) the talents and skills of the student participant, and 3) the interests of the sponsoring Club. Upon completion of the project, the sponsoring club awards a \$1,200 Social Concerns Scholarship to the student serving their community.

Last summer Notre Dame students worked in projects serving needy people such as the elderly, economically deprived children, mentally and physically handicapped individuals, and the homeless. They worked in various environments, including legal-aid clinics, hospitals, shelters, summer camps, and orphanages.



Applications are available at the Center for Social Concerns. The deadline date for applications is February 5, 1986. For more information contact Sue Cunningham, SSP coordinator, at 239-7867.

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## God Be in My Head

God be in my head  
and in my understanding.  
God be in my eyes  
and in my looking.  
God be in my mouth  
and in my speaking.  
God be in my heart  
and in my thinking.  
God be at my end  
and my departing.

*Sarum Primer (1527)*

## Natural Family Planning

Mon. Feb. 3 - Information Night  
about Natural Family Planning  
7:30 p.m. - Hayes Healy Auditorium  
All welcome. Admission free.

Thurs., Feb. 6 & 13 - Natural  
Family Planning Class, 7:00-  
10:00 p.m., Hayes Healy Room  
124. For married and engaged  
couples. Please call 237-  
7401 or 288-2662 to register.