

From the Pastor
January 12, 2020
The Baptism of the Lord

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Many are aware that the Month of January is the month of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. In fact, the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus is kept on January 3rd each year. The Feast gives the character to the entire month.

What's in a name? Thus, did Juliet wonder in Shakespeare's famous play. Perhaps some of us have even asked that ourselves. We know what is meant by that expression. Generally, it means that names are not that important. And yet our faith tells us that names are indeed important. But we know that names are very important. Think, if you will, of the poor and devoted husband whose wife has had a stroke and who will never hear her utter his name again. Think of the poor mother whose child is getting older and who has not yet said mama. Perhaps she has brought the baby to the doctor who, after testing, discovers that the child has a hearing problem and that perhaps she will never hear the child utter her name or any other name for that matter. These are two examples of individuals who understand the importance of names. And think of a young man and woman who are first keeping company. The very name of their beloved thrills them. Yes, names are important.

What a joy then for us to realize that when God became a man, he had a name, Jesus. The very name Jesus means Savior. It is the name that is so powerful that it is used in all the sacraments of the Church. We pray, our help is in the Name who made heaven and earth. In fact, we should try to do everything in the name of the Lord. It is the name which the angel told to St. Joseph and it was St. Joseph who had the great privilege to bestow the Holy Name upon Our Lord. We should have only the greatest reverence for the name of Our Lord. We should bow our head when either saying or hearing His name. In the church's Liturgy the priest bows his head at the name of Our Lord, Our Blessed Mother, the Patron Saint of the parish Church (in our case St. Paul), his own patron saint (in my case, St. James the Apostle), the patron saint of the diocese (in our case St. Agnes) and the saint whose feast is being celebrated. In fact, there is a tradition to use the phrase Our Lord in place of the Sacred Name Jesus so that we do not use the name lightly or carelessly. In the Old Testament, the Chosen People would never use the name of God nor would they write it. Even today, among many pious Jews, they write G-D instead of GOD out of respect for the divine name.

Out of respect for the Sacred Name we should never use Our Lord's name as a curse or as an expression. How sad to hear the name of God used in an expression, sometimes even by young children who have not even begun to read or write. We should only use Our Lord's name in a reverential way and in prayer. It is the same spirit of reverence that teaches us to try to make the Church a place of quiet so that a spirit of prayer permeates the whole building. When the English martyrs were being cruelly tortured for our Catholic faith, the Divine Name gave them strength and courage. They would utter a beautiful aspiration that perhaps we, too, could memorize. It is (in Medieval English) Jesu, Jesu, always be Jesus to me! In Latin the prayer is: Iesu, Iesu, esto mihi semper Iesus!

Blessed be God! Blessed be His Holy Name! Yes, dear friends let us always use the Most Holy Name of Jesus with love and with reverence. May that name be our strength and salvation.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda