

### Lectio V: *de Nomine Sanctissime Iesus*

In centuries past, great saints and mystics encouraged a special devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. You are probably aware that the “Hail Mary” comes from the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel – but the passages there only include Gabriel’s greeting, “Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28), and Elizabeth’s greeting, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1:42). It was in fact Saint Bernardine of Siena who added the Holy Name of Jesus to the end of that first stanza, until now nearly all of Christendom recognizes it as an indispensable part of this prayer. Due to Saint Bernardine’s special devotion to the Holy Name, we have a feast to celebrate it in the month of January, when Jesus would have received His name on the occasion of His circumcision.

The Holy Name is even the subject of some of our most beautiful artwork. The example I have sent out to the floor is from the Church of the Gesù, in Rome. See how the angels bend and bow before the emblem of the Holy Name, and how the glory of God streams out from it in a corona of gold and silver beams. This emblem, first of Greek origin and standing for iota-eta-sigma (the first three letters in the Name of Jesus), has also been described as a Latin acronym, standing for “Iesus Hominum Salvator,” or, “Jesus, Savior of Men.” Countless churches throughout the world incorporate this emblem into beautiful designs in floors, on altars, in walls, on ceilings, in windows – anywhere and everywhere that people can see and reflect on the glory of the Incarnate Word.

It used to be, in the time of the Old Testament, that people believed the name of God too sacred to pronounce, and so *Adonai* (Hebrew for “my Lord”) was used instead. Today, however, the polar opposite position has taken hold, and the name of Jesus is considered by many to be a great profanity. It should grate our ears and break our hearts to hear His Name cursed and blasphemed in this way!

Brothers, as the last several months have shown us, our society is deeply wounded. Men dedicated to the sacred have defiled themselves and those entrusted to their care. Doctors torture and execute the most vulnerable among us, our children. Ostensibly peace-loving people laud aggression and drum up support for oppressors, while they vilify the innocent. And elsewhere, any reverential mention of God is stamped out, since Those In Charge see fit only to have His Name denigrated and dumped in with all that is profane.

The philosopher Peter Kreeft once said, “In an age that has thrown off all tradition, the only rebellion possible is orthodoxy.” Let us be rebels, then. It is the only sensible thing left to do. In our thoughts, in our words, in what we do, and in what we fail to do, while the world around us disparages all that is holy, let us show true reverence for our God and all of His Creation! And let us begin with the honor due to the Holy Name. Whenever you hear the Name of God profaned or blasphemed, offer a prayer of reparation. “Sit Nomen Domini benedictum” – “Blessed be the Name of the Lord.” Perhaps, if you are able and if you possess the courage, correct the person who has offended the Holy Name with his or her speech. Revive the old practice of bowing your head at the Name of Jesus, the name of Mary, the mention of the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, and the names of the saints on their feast days or in their churches. The Holy Spirit will see these small acts of love and devotion and pour forth abundant spiritual fruits in all other parts of our lives, simply for practicing the virtue of reverence at every mention of Our Lord.

Christ tells us, “In my Name they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17). In John’s Gospel, He says, “If you ask the Father anything in My Name He will give it to you” (John 16:23). Later, Saint Paul admonishes the Philippians, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10). Though His Name be spoken by human tongues, and even profaned by many, the Name of God remains sacred indeed. Let us honor that Name, and the Lord whose Name it is, in all that we do.

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