

## ***The Homily : The Name of Jesus.***

[Fr Stephen Smuts – Christ Church, Cape Town]

*“May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable to Thee, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen”*

“*What’s in a name?*” asks Shakespeare.

Far from being arbitrary, names hold deep intrinsic value and worth... When the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to the hillside town of Nazareth in Galilee, to announce to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she would conceive and bring forth a Son, he told her to “*call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sin*” (St. Matt. 1:21). God was the One who chose His Son’s name!

The Greek name *Isēous* (Jesus), is the equivalent of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, which, indeed, means, “*Jehovah shall save.*” That pretty much sums up the function and role of Jesus in Scripture. While on earth He performed many wonderful works, and taught and revealed many truths, but the driving force behind the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, was saving the lost. Singularly, the Name of Jesus is the most important name under heaven and earth by which God has elected to reveal Himself and His historic plan of salvation to mankind. So, the Name of Jesus is really our deepest connection to God and the heavenly realm.

Now, I don’t think there is any way that we could ever really fully come to terms with the divine nature and mercy of an all-powerful, glorious, and majestic Creator, apart from the revelation of His Son, Jesus. And as a result, over the centuries, devout Christian believers have turned to and invoked the precious Name of Jesus, for we understand and know that there is incredible power in His name: The power to save!

Devotions to and veneration of the Name of Jesus, date back to the earliest days of Christianity.

One of the most ancient, that we still recognise today, is the IHS monogram; which is derived from the Greek word for Jesus, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ and is generally interpreted as: *Jesus Hominum Salvator* — “*Jesus Saviour of mankind.*” Perhaps you will recall at some point seeing these letters embroidered on priestly vestments, or altar frontals, or even etched on ornaments and other religious objects in your Church? They are placed there to remind us to call on, venerate, and glorify the Holy Name of Jesus.

Another ancient devotion to His name that we still hold dear, again, also relating and tied into the salvific meaning and nature of His name, is the so-called “Jesus Prayer.” How many of us have not uttered and turned to these simplistic but beautiful words, particularly in times of crisis and strife: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*”

This meditative humble prayer is considered by many, especially in the Eastern churches, to be stronger than all other prayers simply by virtue of the power of the Holy Name, Jesus.

Which all really should serve to challenge you and me, to ask:

- \* How important is the Name of Jesus in your life?
- \* How important is the Name of Jesus in your home?
- \* How important is the Name of Jesus in your Church?

Is His Name esteemed and revered for the sacred title it is? St. Paul emphasises this reverence for Jesus’ name, when he declares that in Him we have a “*name which is above every name, [and] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth*” (Phil. 2:9-10).

Traditional Anglican Clergy and Laity, as a consequence, will often bow/bend their heads as a pious gesture of acknowledgement and respect particularly during worship in the Mass, whenever the Holy Name of Jesus is mentioned, liturgically.

But sadly, despite all that His precious name denotes and signifies — unconditional love, favour, healing, blessings, reconciliation, and salvation (that, which is found in no other, cf. Acts 4:12) — Jesus’ Holy Name is so often met and treated with ridicule, contempt, and scorn in this world. People curse, and blaspheme the unblemished Name of Jesus all too easily. The Name that is the power of the gospel message, is rejected and humiliated. And although the world may frequently treat the treasured Name of Jesus as ordinary, or a punch line, or even use it almost like punctuation, to us who love Him, it should remain costly, hallowed, and never taken lightly.

When St. Peter was told to stop preaching about Jesus, he responded, boldly, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). The salvation for which the world professes to be searching, lies right before us... The Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the one true source of deliverance, salvation, freedom, and favour. What a wonderful Name His is!

So, my dear Brothers and Sisters, may our focus always remain on Jesus. Let us hold high His Holy Name. Nothing compares to it. For it is in and through the Name of Jesus that God offers us a way back to, and enables us to have, a lasting eternal relationship with Himself. There is simply no other way. There is no greater love. There is no rival. There is no equal. There is no other name, but the Name of Jesus, the Christ, our Saviour, and King.

Allow me to conclude with one final consideration:

*“If you think on the Name of Jesus continually and hold it stably, it purges your sin and kindles your heart.”*  
— Richard Rolle, 14<sup>th</sup> cen.

The Holy Name of Jesus invites us into a deep intimacy and friendship with the person of Jesus. And it is only this relationship that can save us, and fulfil the deepest longings of our human hearts.

+ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

## **The Falling asleep of the Virgin Mary      15<sup>th</sup> August**



### **The Collect**

*O GOD, who on this day didst take to Thyself blessed Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Thy only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, grant that we who celebrate her glory may be aided by her prayers, and may come to share her heavenly and eternal joys; through the same, Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen*

**The words of the Magnificat (St Luke 1 :46ff)** *Said every day as a part of the Divine Office of Morning Prayer.*

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, <sup>47</sup> And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. <sup>48</sup> For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered

the proud in the imagination of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. <sup>53</sup> He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. <sup>54</sup> He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; <sup>55</sup> As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.