

**SAID ED November 23, 2008**

### **What's in a name? A lot!**

I have always had a problem with taking the name of the Lord in vain. I have studied the biblical texts over the years and have come to a rich understanding that God's name is not to be taken lightly. I am offended when in conversation someone will use the name of the Lord to make a point, or to express emotion or to try to be funny. I also realize that the Bible teaches us that we must not do things in the name of God which are not right; such as White Supremacists claiming that God has made them better than other people.

I try to ask myself if I would like my name used as an explicative or a throw away line to get other's attention. Clearly I would not. I find it difficult to hear others use God's name in this way.

The Scriptural authors often make reference to the "Name that is above all other names" In the letter to the Philippians Paul says: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," (see Philippians 2:10-11).

When we invoke Jesus' name, we are asking for his divine and powerful assistance. Jesus went a step further and promised that when we use his name in faith, God will act on our behalf. He said: "... Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name He will give you" (John 16:23-24). St. Paul echoed this teaching, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

A recent Vatican directive asked us to stop using the sacred name of God – Yahweh – in the liturgy. In the Hebrew tradition the personal name of God (usually rendered YHWH in English) was not used out of reverence and respect. It was only spoken once a year in the Temple and then by the High Priest behind the curtain in the "Holy of Holies". This tradition endues today. Out of the same type of respect and reverential distance, our Jewish sister and brothers refer to the God as "The Most High", "The Almighty", "The Lord", etc. Our church is asking us to be respectful of this tradition too. We run the risk of becoming so familiar with the proper name of God that we forget who God is.

Therefore, out of respect, we should not be using it freely. In fact, the Christian tradition has steadfastly resisted using it. Until the last few decades, we have translated the biblical word as "The Lord." My sources tell me that Oregon Catholic Press (OCP) has published revised downloadable editions of the seven songs affected by this directive. Go to <http://www.ocp.org/directive08> to check this out. It is a way to honor the name of God and show respect for the Divine Presence in our daily lives.

I would also ask everyone to mind your language when you are in a heated moment. The name of God is sacred to all believers and we can cheapen it by overly familiar or improper use of the name of God. What do you think?

Have a great week.

PS Don't forget to bring your Bibles for the solemn blessing next weekend!

