

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

- [1] CCC 432
- [2] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 253-254
- [3] CCC 2666
- [4] CCC 2668
- [5] CCC 435
- [6] *ibid.*
- [7] *ibid.*
- [8] <http://www.catholictradition.org/Christ/holy-name.htm#FEAST>

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Gospel Reading – Mark 1:21-28 – Roman Missal

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” Jesus rebuked him and said, “Quiet! Come out of him!” The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, “What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.” His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

Spiritual Reading

From a letter to the Church of Smyrna by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr
Christ has called us to his kingdom and glory

From Ignatius, known as Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, his beloved, at Smyrna in Asia, wishing you all joy in an immaculate spirit and the Word of God. By his mercy you have won every gift and lack none, filled as you are with faith and love, beloved of God and fruitful in sanctity. I celebrate the glory of Jesus Christ as God, because he is responsible for your wisdom, well aware as I am of the perfection of your unshakeable faith. You are like men who have been nailed body and soul to the cross of Jesus Christ, confirmed in love by his blood. In regard to the Lord, you firmly believe that he was *of the race of David according to the flesh*, but God’s son by the will and power of God; truly born of the Virgin and baptized by John, *that all justice might be fulfilled*; truly nailed to a cross in the flesh for our sake under Pontius Pilate and the Tetrarch Herod, and of his most blessed passion we are the fruit. And thus, by his resurrection he raised up a standard over his saints and faithful ones for all time (both Jews and Gentiles alike) in the one body of his Church. For he endured all this for us, for our salvation; and he really suffered, and just as truly rose from the dead. As for myself, I am convinced that he was united with his body even after the resurrection. When he visited Peter and his companions, he said to them: *Take hold of me, touch me and see that I*

am not a spirit without a body. Immediately they touched him and believed, clutching at his body and his very spirit. And for this reason they despised death and conquered it. In addition, after his resurrection, the Lord ate and drank with them like a real human being, even though in spirit he was united with his Father. And so I am giving you serious instruction on these things, dearly beloved, even though I am aware that you believe them to be so.

The Holy Name of Jesus – Lesson and Discussion

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?”

The name of Jesus has immense importance to understand who He is and what our faith teaches. It is in the very name of Jesus that signifies “the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation, so that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”[1]

What does the name “Jesus” mean? “The name of Jesus, from the Aramaic Yeshu and the Hebrew Jehoshua, which means ‘Yahweh is salvation.’ It was given to Christ by the angel at the time of the Annunciation (Luke 1:21).”[2]

Why is the name of Jesus so important? The very name is important because it tells us who He is, our salvation. In the gospel reading even the demon confesses that Jesus is the “Holy One” (Mk. 1:24), not out of faith but out of fear. When we proclaim the name of Jesus it should be out of hope for salvation and not in fear of damnation.

The catechism teaches a lot of the importance of the name of Jesus. “But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: Jesus. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: ‘Jesus,’ ‘YHWH saves.’ The name ‘Jesus’ contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray ‘Jesus’ is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him.”[3]

How is the name of Jesus used in prayer? The name of Jesus should always be the centrality of our prayer. It can be as easy as just saying His name over and over again. “The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the word and ‘brings forth fruit with patience.’ This prayer is possible ‘at all times’ because it is not one

occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus.”[4]

In our liturgy, we hear the priest always conclude every prayer with the name of Jesus. “The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayer conclude with the words ‘through our Lord Jesus Christ.’”[5] In one of our most common Catholic prayers, the Hail Mary we invoke the name Jesus. “The Hail Mary reaches its high point in the words ‘blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.’”[6] Finally, “The Eastern prayer of the heart, the Jesus Prayer, says: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word ‘Jesus’ on their lips.”[7]

The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus

Jesus’ name is so important that we have a feast day on January 3rd to commemorate it.

This feast is celebrated on the second Sunday after Epiphany. It is the central feast of all the mysteries of Christ the Redeemer because it unites all of the other feasts of the Lord. The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus shows us what Jesus is to us, what He has done, is doing and will do for mankind.

This feast originated around the end of the fifteenth century and was instituted by some bishops in Germany, Scotland, England, Spain and Belgium. Bernardine dei Busti composed the Office and the Mass for the feast and Pope Sixtus IV approved them. The orders of the Franciscans, Carmelites, Dominicans and Augustinians spread the feast throughout the sixteenth century.[8]

St. Bernard of Clairvaux left some beautiful reflections on the spiritual benefits that we receive if we are devoted to the Most Holy Name of Jesus. “The sweet Name of Jesus produces in us holy thoughts, fills the soul with noble sentiments, strengthens virtue, begets good works, and nourishes pure affections. All spiritual food leaves the soul dry, if it contains not that penetrating oil, the Name Jesus. When you take your pen, write the Name Jesus: if you write books, let the Name of Jesus be contained in them, else they will possess no charm or attraction for me; you may speak, or you may reply, but if the Name of Jesus sounds not from your lips, you are without unction and without charm. Jesus is honey in our mouth, light in our eyes, a flame in our heart. This name is the cure for all diseases of the soul. Are you troubled? Think but of Jesus, speak but the Name of Jesus, the clouds disperse, and peace descends anew from heaven. Have you fallen into sin? So that you fear death? Invoke the Name of Jesus, and you will soon feel life returning. No obduracy of the soul, no weakness, no coldness of heart can resist this holy Name; there is no heart which will not soften and open in tears at this holy name. Are you surrounded by sorrow and danger? Invoke the Name of Jesus, and your fears will vanish.”