January 3rd: Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

Gospel text (*Lk* 2:21-24): When eight days were completed for his circumcision, He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,” and to offer the sacrifice of “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,” in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

“He was named Jesus”

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Today, immersed in the Christmas cycle, we celebrate the Most Holy Name of Jesus. The veneration of this Holy Name arose in the fourteenth century. St. Bernardino of Siena and his disciples spread this devotion: « This is the most holy name desired by the patriarchs, awaited with anxiety, supplicated with moans, summoned with sighs, required with tears, given when the fullness of grace arrives » (St. Bernardino).

After various liturgical situations, Saint John Paul II restored this celebration in the Roman Missal. Just on this day the Jesuits celebrate the title of their "Society of Jesus".

It is proper for people -angels and men, that is, spiritual beings- to distinguish themselves in their unique singularity with a proper name. But God's case is special: properly, there is no name that fits Him. He, because of his infinite perfection, is above all things and all of us, He is above all names (see Phil 2:9), He is the Ineffable, He is the Unnameable ...

However, because of his infinite Mercy, he has leaned towards man and even accepted to put on a "proper name". The first revelation of his name was made in the desert when Moses asked him: “When they ask me, ‘What is your name?’ what do I tell them?” I am who I am” (Ex 3:13-14). While sometimes we have to say that "I am a man", "I am a woman" ... (we have to specify in many ways what we are), God - instead - simply "IS". Therefore, we could say that "I am who I am" is the philosophical name that in some way adapts to God.

But in his generous condescension, God the Son has incarnated to save us: He is perfect God and perfect man. And, as such, "He was named Jesus" (Lk 2:21) by his parents. "Jeshua" means "God is salvation." Here it is a Name - the Most Holy Name of Jesus - that deserves all veneration and total respect. This is indicated by the second commandment of the Law of God ... And this is what Jesus himself taught us: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name ...".