

June 11, 2017 Holy Is His Name Homily: Brothers and sisters, several years ago, at the invitation of the Israeli government, the erstwhile pope, Benedict XVI, visited the Holocaust memorial, Vad Yashem, in Jerusalem. It was a solemn and sober event, which was widely covered by the world's media. In his prepared remarks, Benedict quoted from the book of the prophet Isaiah ("I will give in my house and within my wall a memorial and a name. I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off") and then offered words of comfort for the victims and those who managed to survive the horrifying ordeal. He said, "They lost their lives, but will never lose their names. These are indelibly etched in the hearts of their loved ones, their surviving fellow prisoners, and all those determined never to allow such an atrocity to disgrace mankind again. Most of all, their names are forever fixed in the memory of almighty God". Each one of us bears a name. A name affords us an identity. To have a name means the possibility of being called. God calls us by name.

On this feast of the Most Holy Trinity, let us remind ourselves that whenever we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, we remember God's name in which we were baptized. Ours is no solitary God, but a communion of divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Church is called to a witness of communion. As we are created in the image and likeness of God, our potential is realized, in part, by our communion and dialogue with others. Surely it is not without significance that we are often identified by our relations to others. For an example, I am a "son", a "brother", an "uncle" and so forth. The enemies of faith have, time and again, sought to erase our names and identify us only by number. Indeed in Sacred Scripture, the enemy of God does not bear a name, but a number, 666.

The name of God is hallowed ("Hallowed be thy name"). Even some of our best known and loved hymns make reference to the Holiness of the Name of God. "Holy God, we praise thy name" is the closing hymn of today's mass.

For a moment, ask yourself the question, would I ever surrender my name for any reason? If I truly consider my name to be sacrosanct, would I exchange it for something of inferior value? A story: in the 1950's, a promising young actress, Kim Novak, had a rather heated conversation with the corporate heads of Columbia Studios in Hollywood. According to Ms. Novak, the CEO, Harry Cohn, did not think her name was suitable and he insisted that she give it up in exchange for a more seductive one, "Kit Marlowe". She stubbornly refused. As she pointed out, she was christened with the name, Kim; her parents conferred on her the blessing of her name and most important of all, God knows her by the name chosen for her at birth. She did not want to be identified as a sex siren. In her words, that would be degrading and insulting. The studio heads capitulated to her demand. And her career never suffered!

We begin our liturgies by the simple action of making the sign of the cross: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It proclaims the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. At the same time, it acknowledges the oneness of God, because we bless ourselves in a singular "name" ("In the name of").

Christ has revealed this truth to us. For us Christians, it is the central mystery of our faith and life. Let us ponder the beauty of our names. And let us not forget the Holy name of God.

Amen!