January - Month of the Holy Name of Jesus

â€œBecause of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that 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, to the glory of God the Father.â€• (Phil 2: 9-11)Â

In this extract from his letter Saint Paul reminds the Philippians that God the Father chose the name of Jesus for His only Son, the Redeemer. The Church traditionally dedicates the month of January to the Most Holy Name of Jesus.

A name usually communicates something of that personâ€™s nature, their work or mission. Appropriately the name â€˜Jesusâ€ means â€˜saviourâ€™. It expresses the very purpose of the Son of God who accomplished His redemptive mission with love by offering Himself for each one of us. The name of Jesus should therefore be esteemed as sacred.

The name of Jesus was chosen in heaven by God. The Angel Gabriel so informed the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Annunciation: â€œBehold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesusâ€• (Luke 1:31). The angel of the Lord also assured Saint Joseph with these words concerning Mary: â€œShe will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sinsâ€• (Matthew 1:21)

The Holy Name is to be accorded the utmost respect for it constantly reminds us of Godâ€™s great favour of salvation. In the name of Jesus we pray to the Father. In His name the Church administers the sacraments. Holy Scripture states that those who call upon His name will be saved. It is a devout practice to bow oneâ€™s head at the invocation of the name of Jesus.

In the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite the 3rd January is now the optional memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. The feast was originally granted to the Franciscans in 1530 and was extended to the whole Church in 1727 during the pontificate of Innocent XIII. The feast is a reminder of the dignity due to the Holy Name.

Down through the centuries the Holy Name has been depicted in art using various shortened and symbolic forms. Among the best-known are:

Chi-Rho Symbol
This monogram spread universally. It is a symbol of Christ the King and signifies Christâ€™s dominion in our world.

IHS Symbol
Perhaps the best known monogram and promoted widely by St. Bernadine of Siena. The abbreviation is taken from the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus.

Ichthys Symbol
The abbreviation is taken from the initial letters of the five words of Christâ€™s full title in Greek: Iesous Christos Theou Yos Soter. This translates as â€˜Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviourâ€™. The word â€˜Ichthysâ€™ means â€˜fishâ€™, hence the sha

PRAYER LINKS

Invocation to the Most Holy Name of Jesus
Courtesy of Catholic Culture

Act of Reparation for Blasphemies uttered against the Holy Name of Jesus
Courtesy of Catholic Culture

Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus
Courtesy of EWTN