

His name matters. It matters because, as the prophet Isaiah says, “**there is no other**” god besides the LORD (Is 45:5). Malachi asks, “**Has not one God created us?**” (Mal 2:10). The Lord Himself commands, “**You shall have other gods before Me...for I the LORD your God am a jealous God**” (Ex 20:3, 5). His name matters because He alone is the Creator of all things visible and invisible. He is the supreme Ruler of all things. All are accountable to Him. That we have any sense of justice, of right and wrong, bears witness to the just One who has fashioned us as moral creatures. The heavens declare His glory, and our conscience testifies to His existence and justice.

But it is not just the acknowledgement of His existence that matters. His name matters. His name tells you who He is. He is not just the Supreme Being who demands us to be nice to one another. Even if that were the sole requirement to stand before Him with no need to fear, you know how well we have all fouled that up! He is not just almighty, He is good. He is merciful and gracious. He is the God who redeems and delivers. His name matters then, not just because He is all powerful, but because He is the Savior. We must know who this Savior is!

His name matters because He continues to shepherd and guide. He does not just deliver once in the far-off past, but continues to be at work in this world and life. His name matters because are not just to know that He exists, but who He is. And He has revealed that to us, told us His name: Father Son and Holy Spirit. That is who created. God was there in the beginning, and He spoke His Word as His Spirit hovered over the waters. The psalmist confesses “**By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host**” (Ps 33:6). From the very beginning, and when God speaks of that beginning, we see God show Himself to be three. You cannot speak without a word. And there is no word without a speaker. And words come by the breath of the mouth, where there is no breath there are no words. Speaker, words, and breath all belong together, and yet they are distinct. Scripture tells us that God, His Word, and His Spirit created. The Speaker, the Word, and the Spirit are three. And yet there is only one act of creation. There is only one Creator.

His name matters because He is the One who gives life to all things. His name matters because He was “**lifted up**” in death to give the “**eternal life**” that triumphs over death (Jn 3:14–15) to all who believe in Him. His name matters because that gift of life comes to its fullest when we are born of water and the Spirit, given His own name, the fullness of His grace with no distinction between Jew, Greek, slave or free. This is no generic god. The anonymous god of American civic religion, the god who is whatever you want him to be, the god that is invoked by adherents of whatever religion, that god will not do. That god is no god at all, but a demon. Because that god is not the god who did and does all this. The God who gives life is the God who has spoken, who has given us His name, telling us who He is: Father Son and Holy Spirit.

He is the God of His people, who hear His Word and believe in Him. He is the God who delivered His people Israel from slavery, destroying their enemies. He is the God who took up our flesh, bearing the sin of all mankind, winning forgiveness for each and every person who has ever and will ever live. He is the God who makes His people holy, as He delivers that forgiveness and true deliverance to them. His name matters because He is the one true God, the only one, without whom there is no salvation. Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold this, the catholic faith: that God is Triune, a community of living, eternal persons, and that the Son took on the flesh of a Middle Eastern man, and thereby worked out the salvation of the world, your salvation.

So your name matters too. The one Lord who is God, is *your* God. He says, “**I the LORD, your God...**” He is the God of people, the “**God of our fathers,**” and so He identifies Himself as “**the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**” He is the God confessed by all who hold the catholic faith. He is the God who created *you*. “I believe that God has made *me*.” You are His unique creation, there is no other like you. He is the God who redeemed *you*. “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed *me*.” God’s own beloved Son shed His blood for you. He has brought *you* to faith and makes *you* holy. “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called *me* by the Gospel, enlightened *me* with His gifts, sanctified and kept *me* in the true faith.” God Himself is intensely, actively involved with you.

Your name matters because you have been born from above. As you bear the family name of your parents, you are identified as belonging to them, so you bear God’s name, identified as belonging to Him. He calls you by your name,

reckons you as a righteous member of His family because your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for. He gives you the name “Christian,” and the same status as His own Son. This shapes how we regard one another in the Church. We are members of the same family. What we confess the Holy Trinity has done and continues to do for us, He does for His whole creation, and His whole Church. He “has made me *and all creatures*. Jesus was given as the demonstration of His Father’s love for the whole world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” The Church is the family that is fashioned by blood and water. That is a tighter bond than mere DNA, ethnic group, or shared citizenship. We are fellow members of the body of Christ. We matter to one another.

This is true not just in the holy Church, but also for our lives in this world, every human life. Their names matter. George Floyd and James Scurlock. Sinners, to be sure. Not the most ideal public records you might say. Their names matter. Derek Chauvin and Jake Gardner. Sinners to be sure. Their records will always have something listed for May 25 and 30. I don’t know if you’re still allowed to sing this song anymore, I suspect it’s not very PC, but the song I learned as a child is absolutely correct: “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.”

Every person is precious in His sight, because the Holy Trinity is the Lord of Life. As Christians we make a distinction between God’s work through civil authority and His work through the Church. He gives life, possessions, and reputation to all people. Where these are unjustly harmed or even wrongfully taken away, we go to the civil authorities whom God Himself has given to administer justice, to protect the innocent, and punish the wicked. When wrongs are committed against us, we pray for and seek justice, not vengeance. We are to work as citizens for equal protection for all under the Law, because it is God who is the Giver of life. Civil authority is charged by God to protect and honor life. Where the state does that by punishing wickedness, we as Christians can rejoice because that is, in fact, God at work through His servants.

So we are to honor those in authority over us, not just when we feel they deserve it, but because of the office they hold. We can be grateful to God that in this nation, those who hold public office are accountable to the public they serve. We do well to pray for them, especially when we have been grieved by their actions. I imagine most of you have figured out that I believe some civil authorities overstepped their bounds these past months when they placed particular requirements and limits on the church, not just putting a cap on attendance, but in some places presuming to tell the church how to administer the Sacrament of the Altar. As Christians we are free to not obey when the government speaks outside of its authority. Yet even in those cases, we don’t stop praying for our public servants.

Sometimes civil authority fails, or does not pursue the just course. There’s been a long history of that, not just in this nation, but throughout the world. When this happens, when the state fails to exercise its God-given authority, we are to speak out. We speak up for the unborn, whose lives don’t seem to matter to much of the government, not worth protecting. When we hear racist slander, we are to speak up to defend our neighbor. And what about when there is no further recourse, no justice? We entrust it to the God who promises to repay, who will, if not in this life, then certainly in the next, put all things to right. Taking vengeance into one’s own hands by shooting abortionists or cops, smashing windows or faces, badgering public servants, and excusing it as though it were some righteous indignation, is not just unlawful and a sin against neighbor, it is an act of unbelief. It comes from a refusal to believe that God will avenge all injustice, and instead seeks to mete out justice itself. As much as we condemn the unjust taking of life in any form, we condemn and reject lawlessness. God is against both, and He punishes both.

As Christians, we treasure all life because we recognize it is given by the Holy Trinity who is the source of life. As the Church we love and desire the good of every person, because we recognize there is no sinner alive, no matter how egregious their sins may be, for whom Christ has not died out of His divine love. There is no person to whom the Holy Spirit does not call out in His holy Word. So even as we can give thanks for due process and civil punishments for those who do wrong, we also pray for them. We pray for our world, our nation, and our city that are filled to the brim with sinners. That includes us. We struggle to do the things which our Lord commands us. We cannot do them perfectly. We falter in love and compassion for the neighbor who is before us. It is far easier to ignore someone crying for help than be inconvenienced. We cling to the sins we’ve suffered, stoking what we believe to be just hatred. The Holy Spirit calls us to repent of our sins, desiring to do better. And to receive absolution, that is forgiveness, firmly believing that our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. That confidence enables us to live as God’s children in this life. Carrying His blessed and holy name to all those whom we meet, sharing His love and forgiveness, His Word of life, to our families and neighbors, our community and our nation.