

THE NAMES OF GOD

The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a directive that will affect the worship at Our Savior parish to some degree (as it will affect the worship of all churches): the proper Name of God is not to be used in public worship in any way. What's all this about?

First of all, the "proper Name" is written in Hebrew (transliterated here into English) as YHWH: it is known as the "Tetragrammaton," or the "4-letter" Name. It is the Name revealed to Moses at the burning bush, as opposed to the Hebrew word "El," which is the generic word "God."

Though the Tetragrammaton is used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, since before the time of Christ the Name was never pronounced by observant Jews. This was out of respect, and also for fear of violating the commandment "You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain."

What I just wrote is a hint as to how Jews solved the problem of the Name: when they saw the Tetragrammaton they pronounced the word "Adonai," meaning "Lord." Translators of many English Bibles indicate this special use of "Adonai" by printing "LORD" in all capital letters.

Out of respect for our Jewish brothers and sisters, we will now (at least, in public worship) follow a similar practice and never pronounce the Name. But when did we?

The answer is "In our hymns." A prime example is *You Are Near*, which is #722 in our hymnal. Have a look at it. As of this point, we have 2 options: we might try to substitute the word "Father" in place of the proper Name, or we might just not sing the hymn at this point. For the time being, I think the 2nd of these options is what we need to embrace. This means that our music ministers need to be alert not to select this or any other hymn that has the proper Name of God included in the verses or refrain.

I personally have advocated this position for a long number of years. It is the reason I have disliked the Jerusalem Bible translation, especially of the Book of Psalms. It was and is the "hymn-book" of others, and if we co-opt it we should do so respectfully. We can do this easily, I believe, and after the recent upset Jews felt with the Good Friday prayers for the "Tridentine Rite," this is the least we can do to show good-will.