

Third Sunday in Lent (C)
February 28, 2016.

This is my name forever, and this my memorial for all generations (Ex. 3:15).

Both our first reading and the epistle speak to us of the revelation received by the Jewish people during their captivity in Egypt. This experience was formative for them; so much so, that they were known as *Hebrews*, a word derived from the Egyptian word for slave, *hubaru*. It was in this time of tribulation that the LORD God chose to reveal Himself. *God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO AM' He said further, 'Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'* (Ex. 3:14) This mysterious name, which we also refer to as the *Tetragrammaton*, the four letters, is the Holy Name of God; a name not to be taken in vain. For this reason, Jewish people will often refer to God as *Adonai*, 'the Lord' or *Ha Shem*, 'the Name'. It is a great privilege to receive this revelation and to know the true nature of God. The God who reveals Himself is a God of Life for another way of rendering God's revelation of His name to Moses is this: *I am the One who brings into being whatever comes into being.* We affirm this truth in the first article of the Creed: *I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.*

Why was this revealed to the Jewish people and why at that time? Because in God's plan of salvation, Israel is the representative proxy for all humanity. This is the foundational premise of the Jewish people and of Israel. This is why the Jews are called *the chosen people*, because they are. God chose Israel to stand in representation of all people everywhere. This is what it means to be a representative proxy for humanity. They had been chosen to be light to the nations (Cf. *Is. 49:6*), and for this reason God punished their infidelity as a violation of the revelation and mission He had given them. Through the Prophets, gradually and progressively God revealed the full implications of this revelation and in Jesus Our Saviour, God has revealed that He desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. This is the revelation and mission that God now makes known through the Church, the new Israel of God. All of humanity is destined to share God's own divine life through the gift of salvation. The Holy Name of Jesus (*Jeshua*) means 'God is salvation'. *Concealed within the name of Jesus is the Tetragrammaton, the mysterious name from Mount Horeb, here expanded into the statement: God saves... The God who is, is the saving God* (Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, the Infancy Narratives*, p. 30). One of the chief reasons why Christianity is different certainly from Islam and Buddhism or Hinduism and even from Judaism itself is because in Christ Our Saviour, God has revealed Himself in a personal, tangible way; and the true nature of God has been revealed – One God, Three Divine Persons. The Sacraments of the Church are an extension of this in that God touches us tangibly through the Sacraments and we share the life of God.

We receive the Sacraments so that we might be tangibly conformed to Jesus Christ, the new Adam. St. Paul teaches us that *the first Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit* (2 Cor. 15:45). We share His life and the life that He offers is eternal life, a life that we begin to live when we first received the grace of Baptism. On Easter Sunday we will renew this grace as we renew our baptismal vows. This Lenten time is a privileged time when everything in the sacred liturgy is so directed that we might develop and deepen a true interior life, a life of grace or spiritual life. Our

fasting, prayer and almsgiving are intended to draw us ever deeper into the Mystery of this God who has brought us into being, redeemed us and who wills to share His very life with us. This is why the Sacraments are so important and why we must receive them with reverence and devotion; so that they might foster this life in us and produce the fruits of holiness in abundance. The parable of the fig tree teaches us that it is never too late to work for God's kingdom and to produce its fruits. The evidence of a serious, mature interior life is manifested by a spirit of self-sacrifice in the imitation of Christ.

The pillars of our interior life are here before us as in every Catholic Church: the Cross, the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin, *Crux, Hostia et Virgo*. It was in the tribulation of Mount Calvary that the fullest revelation of God's nature was revealed, not only to the Jewish people but to all humanity. *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself* (Jn. 12:32). The Sacrifice of Our Lord on Mount Calvary is what defines us and forms us. The universal symbol of the Christian Faith is the Cross and more specifically, the Crucifix. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the perpetuation of this revelation through the ages and for this reason the Mass is the foundation of our interior life. *The Mass is the only moment that transforms man on this earth*. Rightly then do we celebrate it in a spirit of adoration and thanksgiving. In our prayer today let us remember in a special way the many who no longer attend Holy Mass and those who do not understand what the Mass is. Comparatively speaking, certainly when it comes to fidelity to the Mass, ours is a time of great tribulation but such a time may also be an occasion of deliverance from the spirit of this age, and a fruitful rediscovery of the transformative power of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Memorial of Our Lord's Sacred Passion.

May we make our own the words and sentiments of the ancient Martyrs of Abitinae in Africa; who, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian in the year 304, having been arrested for attending Holy Mass, gave as their defence an affirmation of the life that only God can give us: *We cannot live without the Sunday Eucharist (Sine dominico non possumus)*. May the fidelity of Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross be for us a source of strength and an inspiration for a greater love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which in the fullness of His revelation, is God's *memorial for all generations* (Ex. 3:15).