



Selected from the Writings of St. Alphonsus Maria

## JESUS OUR SAVIOUR.

Consider that the Infant Jesus, eight days after His Birth, showed Himself even then to be our *Saviour*, by shedding His divine Blood for us in the Circumcision, and taking the Name of *Saviour*. O most merciful Infant God, I give Thee thanks, and I beseech Thee by the pain which Thou didst feel, and by the Blood which Thou didst shed in Thy Circumcision, to grant me the grace and the power to tear out of my heart all earthly affections.

### I.

Behold how the Eternal Father, having sent His Son to suffer and die for us, wills that on this day He should be circumcised, and should begin to shed His Divine Blood, which He has to shed for the last time on the day of His death upon the Cross in a sea of contumely and sorrow. And wherefore? In order that this innocent Son should thus pay the penalties which we have deserved. The Holy Church exclaims: “O admirable condescension of divine pity towards us! O inestimable love of charity! To redeem, the slave Thou hast delivered Thy Son to death !”

O Eternal God, who could ever have bestowed upon us this infinite gift but Thou Who art infinite goodness and infinite love. O my God, if in giving me Thy Son, Thou hast given me the dearest treasure Thou hast, it is right that I should give myself entirely to Thee. Yes, my God, I give Thee my whole self; do Thou accept of me, and permit me not to leave Thee again.

### II.

Behold, on the other hand, the Divine Son, Who, humble, and full of love towards us, embraces the bitter death destined for Him in order to save us sinners from eternal death, and willingly begins on this day to make satisfaction for us to the divine justice with the price His Blood. *He humbled himself*, says the Apostle, *becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of cross.*—(*Phil. ii.*, 8). Thou, therefore, O my Jesus, accepted death for my love; what, then, shall I do? Shall I continue to offend Thee by my sins? No, Redeemer, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. I am sorry from my heart that I have caused Thee so much bitterness in times past. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and for the future I will never cease to love Thee.

Our Redeemer has said : Greater love than this no hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. —(*St. John xv.*, 13). Thou, O my Jesus, as St. Paul tells us, hast shown greater love than this toward us, by giving Thy life for us who were enemies. Behold one of them, O Lord, at Thy feet. How many times have I, a miserable sinner, renounced Thy friendship

because I would not obey Thee! I now see the evil I have done; pardon me, Jesus, for I could wish to die of sorrow. I now love with my whole soul, and I desire nothing else but to love Thee and to please Thee. O Mary, Mother of God my Mother, pray to Jesus for me.

### THE NAME OF JESUS CONSOLES.

This great Name of Jesus was not given by man, but by God Himself; “The Name of Jesus,” says St. Bernard, “was preordained by God.” It was a new Name : *A new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name.*—(Is. lxii., 2). A new Name which God could give only to Him Whom He destined to be the Saviour of the world. A new and an eternal Name; because, as our salvation was decreed from all eternity, so from all eternity was this Name given to the Redeemer. Nevertheless this Name was only bestowed on Jesus Christ in this world on the day of His Circumcision : *And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus.* The Eternal Father wished at that time to reward the humility of His Son by giving Him so honourable a Name. Yes, while Jesus humbles Himself, submitting in His Circumcision to be branded with the mark of a sinner, it is just that His Father should honour Him by giving Him a Name that exceeds the dignity and sublimity of any other name : *God hath given him a name that is above all names.* —(Phil. ii., 9). And He commands that this Name should be adored by the Angels, by men, and by devils : *That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* —(Ibid. ii., 10). If, then, all creatures are to adore this great Name, still more ought we sinners to adore it, since it was in our behalf that this Name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour, was given to Him; and for this end also He came down from Heaven, namely, to save sinners: “For us men and for our salvation He came down from Heaven, and was made Man.” We ought to adore Him, and at the same time to thank God Who has given Him this Name for our good; for it is this Name that consoles us, defends us, and makes us burn with love.

The Name of Jesus consoles us; for when we invoke Jesus, we find relief in all our afflictions. When we have recourse to Jesus, He wishes to console us because He loves us; and He can do so, because He is not only Man, but He is also the Omnipotent God; otherwise He could not properly have this great Name of *Saviour*. The Name of Jesus signifies that the bearer of it is of infinite power, infinite wisdom and infinite love; so that if Jesus Christ had not united in Himself all these perfections, He could not have saved us : “If any one of these,” says St. Bernard, “had been wanting, Thou couldst not call Thyself *Saviour*.” Thus, when speaking of the Circumcision, the Saint says : “He was circumcised as being the son of Abraham, He was called Jesus as being the Son of God.” He is branded as man with the mark of sin, having taken upon Himself the burden of atoning for sin; and from His very Infancy He began to satisfy for the crimes of men, by suffering and shedding His Blood.

The Name of Jesus is said by the Holy Spirit to be I oil poured out: *Thy name is as oil poured out.*—(Cant. i., 2) And so indeed it is, says St. Bernard; for as oil serves for light, for food, and for medicine, so especially is the Name of Jesus is light : “it is a light when

preached.” And how was it, says the Saint, that the light of Faith shone forth so suddenly in the world that in a short time so many Gentile nations knew the true God, and became His followers, if it was not through hearing the Name of Jesus preached? “Whence, think you, shone forth in the whole world, so bright and so sudden, the light of Faith, except from the preaching of the Name of Jesus ?” Through this Name we have been happily made sons of the true light, that is, sons of the Holy Church; since we were so fortunate as to be born in the bosom of the true Church, in Christian and Catholic kingdoms—a grace which has not been granted to greater part of men, who are born amongst idolaters, Mahometans, or heretics.

Further, the Name of Jesus is a food that nourishes our souls. “The thought of it is nourishment.” This Name gives strength to find peace and consolation even in the midst of the miseries and persecutions of this world. The holy Apostles rejoiced when they were ill-treated, and reviled, being comforted by the Name of Jesus: *They went from the presence of the council rejoicing that were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.* - (Acts. V., 41).

It is light, it is food, and it is also medicine to those who invoke it: “When pronounced, it soothes and anoints.” The holy Abbot says : “At the rising of the light of this Name, the clouds disperse, and calm returns.” If the soul of any one is afflicted and in trouble, let him pronounce the Name of Jesus, and immediately the tempest will cease and peace will return. Does any one fall into sin? Does he run in despair into the snares of death? Let him invoke the Name of Life, and will his life not be renewed? He shall immediately be encouraged to hope for pardon, by calling on Jesus, Who was, destined by the Father to be our Saviour, and obtain pardon for sinners. Euthymius says that if when Judas was tempted to despair, he had invoked the Name of Jesus, he would not have given way to temptation: “If he had invoked that Name, he would not have perished.” Therefore, he adds, no sinner can perish through despair, however abandoned he may be, who invokes the Holy Name, which is one of hope and salvation : “Despair is far off where His Name is invoked.”

But sinners leave off invoking this saving Name, because they do not wish to be cured of their infirmities. Jesus Christ is ready to heal all our wounds; but if people cherish their wounds, and will not be healed, how can Jesus Christ heal them? The Venerable Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, a Sicilian nun, once saw the Saviour, as it seemed, in a hospital, going round with medicines in His hands, to cure the sick people who were there; but these miserable people, instead of thanking Him and begging Him to come to them, drove Him away. So do many sinners, after they have of their own free will poisoned their souls with sins, refuse the gift of health, that is, the grace offered them by Jesus Christ, and thus remain lost through their infirmities.

But, on the other hand, what fear can that sinner have who has recourse to Jesus Christ, since Jesus offers Himself to obtain our pardon from His Father, He having paid by His death the penalty due to us? St. Laurence Justinian says: “He Who had been offended, appointed Himself as Intercessor, and Himself paid what was owing to God.” Therefore, adds the Saint, “if thou art bound down by sickness, if sorrows weary thee, if thou art

trembling with fear, invoke the Name of Jesus.” O poor man, whoever thou art, if thou art weighed down by infirmity or by grief and fear, call on Jesus, and He will console thee. It is enough that we pray to the Father in His Name, and all we ask will be granted to us. This is the promise of Jesus Himself, which He repeated many times, and which cannot fail: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you.*—(Jo. xvi. 23). *Whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My name that will I do.*—(Jo. xiv., 13).

JESUS

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HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESUS.  
(Gospel, Luke ii., 21).

The Name of Jesus is a divine Name, announced Mary on the part of God by St. Gabriel: *and thou shalt call His name Jesus.* —(Luke, i., 31). For that reason it was called a name above all names.—(Phil. ii., 9). And it was also called a Name in which alone salvation is found: *whereby we must be saved.*—(Acts iv., 12). This great Name is likened by the Holy Spirit unto oil: *Thy name is as oil poured out.*—(Cant. i., 2). For this reason, says St. Bernard, that as oil is *light, food, and medicine*, so the Name of Jesus is light to the mind, food to the heart, and medicine to the soul.

It is light to the mind. By this Name the world was converted from the darkness of idolatry to the light of Faith. We who have been born in these regions, where before the coming of Christ our ancestors were Gentiles, should all have been in the same condition had not the Messias come to enlighten us. How thankful ought we not, then, to be to Jesus Christ for the gift of Faith! And what would have become of us if we had been in Asia, in Africa, in America, or in the midst of heretics and schismatics? He who believes not is lost: *He that believeth not shall be condemned.* — (St. Mark xvi., 16) And thus probably we also should have been lost.

O Jesus, Thou Who didst make the power of Thy Name to shine forth to deliver us from the servitude of sin, and the slavery of the devil, deign now and always to preserve our souls from all unworthy subjection. O Jesus all powerful, if the eyes of our souls had not been opened and enlightened by the light of Faith which Thou hast taught us by Thy own mouth, how should we ever have been able to know Thy divine mysteries! Without Thy aid we should always have been buried in the darkness of ignorance and the shadow of death. May thanks be ever given to our sweet Jesus Who has had compassion on us, and, in opening the gates of Heaven to us, has made us heirs of His Eternal Kingdom.

## II.

The Name of Jesus is also food that nourishes our hearts; yes, because this Name reminds us of what Jesus has done to save us. Hence this Name consoles us in tribulation, gives us

strength to walk along the way of salvation, supplies us with courage in difficulties, and inflames us with love for our Redeemer, when we remember what He has suffered for our salvation.

Lastly, this Name is medicine to the soul, because it renders it strong against the temptations of our enemies. The devils tremble and fly at the invocations of this Holy Name, according to the words of the Apostle: *That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* —(Phil. ii., 10). He who in temptation calls upon Jesus shall not fall, and shall be saved: *Praising, I will call upon the Lord; and I will be saved from my enemies.* —(Ps. xvii., 4). And who was ever lost who when he was tempted invoked Jesus? He alone is lost who does not invoke His aid, or who, whilst the temptation continues, ceases to invoke Him. Oh, that I had always called upon Thee, my Jesus; for then I should never have been conquered by the devil! I have miserably lost Thy grace, because in temptation I have neglected to call Thee to my assistance. But now I hope for all things through Thy Holy Name. Write, therefore, O my Saviour, write upon my poor heart Thy most powerful Name of *Jesus*, so that, by having it always in my heart by loving Thee, I may have it always on my lips by invoking Thee, in all the temptations that hell prepares for me to induce me to again become its slave, and to separate myself from Thee. In Thy Name I shall find every good. If I am afflicted, it will console me when I think how much more afflicted Thou hast been than I am, and all for the love of me. If I am disheartened on account of my sins, it will give me courage when I remember that Thou camest into the world to save sinners. If I am tempted, Thy Holy Name will give me strength, when I consider that Thou canst help me more than hell can cast me down; finally, if I feel cold in Thy love, Thy Name will give me fervour, by reminding me of the love that Thou bearest me. I love Thee, my Jesus! To Thee do I give all my heart, O my Jesus! Thee alone will I love! Thee will I invoke as often as I possibly can. I will die with Thy Name upon my lips; a Name of hope, a Name of salvation, a Name of love. O Mary, if thou lovest me, this is the grace I beg of thee to obtain for me—the grace constantly to invoke thy name and that of thy Son; obtain for me that these most sweet Names may be the breath of soul, and that I may repeat them constantly during life, in order to repeat them with my last breath. Jesus and Mary, help me; Jesus and Mary, I love You; Jesus and Mary I recommend my soul to You.



#### THE NAME OF JESUS A NAME OF GLADNESS.

The Name of Jesus was given to the Incarnate Word not by men, but by God Himself. *And thou shalt call his name Jesus.* It is the Name of our Saviour, a Name of Gladness, a

Name of Hope, a Name of Love. Thy Name, then, O Jesus, will always be my defense, my comfort, a fire to keep me always burning with Thy love.

### I.

Consider that the Holy Name of Jesus is not a Name invented by man, but it comes from God, Who wished it to be made known by the Archangel Gabriel, as St. Luke testifies : *His name was called Jesus . . . by the angel* — (St. Luke ii.,21). St. Bernard also says that this Name is not a simple figure of things, or a shadow without reality. Jesus is a Name that expresses perfectly the hypostatic union of the Divine nature and the human nature. The world could not have been saved by God, for God could not suffer, nor by a mere man, because man is limited and finite. This is the reason why the Holy Name *Jesus*, which signifies the same as *Saviour*, as the Angel declares, has been given to the Son of God, made Man through Mary, to show that it was both as God and Man He accomplished the redemption of mankind by delivering men from the slavery of sin. In short, *Jesus* is a Name that comprises Infinity, Eternity, Immensity, Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, and all the adorable Perfections of God. What happiness for us to be reconciled with the Eternal Father through the merits of this divine Mediator Who of His - infinite goodness paid our debt in His precious Blood! Adorable Jesus! if Thou hadst sacrificed Thyself to deliver Thy people from the hands of their enemies in order to acquire an eternal Name, it would be but fair that this Name should surpass and eclipse every other name, even that of the Seraphim, as St. Paul says : *Being, made so much, better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.*—(Heb. i., 4). And if the Eternal Father has wished that this Name should be that of His Son, mayest Thou grant that, having experienced on earth its happy effects, we may arrive at the complete happiness of Heaven to praise Thee and to bless Thee for all eternity.

### II.

The Name of Jesus is a Name of Gladness, a Name of Hope, a Name of Love. It is a Name of Gladness because if the remembrance of past transgressions afflicts us, this Name comforts us in the remembrance that the Son of God became Man for this purpose—to make Himself our Saviour. In fact, as soon as the Name of Jesus passes from the heart to the tongue, by the light of the divine Name darkness is dispersed, the mind is calmed the heart is strengthened, the faculties brighten up, and everything returns to life. There is no name in the world equal to the Name of Jesus in sweetness “Nothing is sweeter to chant,” says St. Bernard “nothing more agreeable to hear, nothing more charming to think of, than the Name of Jesus, the Son of God.’

Oh, how happy shall we be if in all our trials, in all occasions of sorrow, we take care to invoke the glorious Name of Jesus, and while invoking it with our lips to consecrate our hearts to Jesus! It is a Name of Hope, because he that prays to the Eternal Father in the Name of Jesus may hope for every good he asks for. *If you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it to you.*—(St. John. xvi., 23).

It is a Name of Love. It is a sign that represents to us how much God has done for the love of us. The Name of Jesus brings to our remembrance all the suffering which Jesus endured for us in life and in death. Therefore a devout writer exclaims: “O Jesus, how much I cost Thee to be Jesus—that is, my *Saviour!*”

O sweet Jesus, our Love and our Hope! Do Thou write Thy Name on my poor heart and on my tongue, in order that when I am tempted to sin, I may resist by invoking Thee; so that if I am tempted to despair I may trust in Thy merits; and that if I feel myself tepid in loving Thee, Thy Name may inflame my heart at the recollection of how much Thou hast loved me.

Thy Name, then, will always be my defense, my comfort, and the fire that shall always keep me inflamed with Thy love. Make me, therefore, always to call Thee my Jesus and to live and die with Thy Holy Name on my lips saying even with my last breath: “I love Thee, my Jesus; my Jesus, I love Thee.” O Mary, my Queen, make me when I am dying invoke thee continually, together with thy Son Jesus.

#### THE NAME OF JESUS OUR DEFENCE.

The Name of Jesus defends us. Yes, it defends us against all the deceits and assaults of our enemies. For this reason the Messiah was called *God the Mighty*—(*Is. ix.*, 6); and His Name was called by the Wise Man a strong tower : *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*— (*Prov. xviii.*, 10); that we may know that he who avails himself of this powerful Name will not fear all the assaults of hell. St. Paul writes thus : *Christ humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*—(*Phil. ii.*, 8). Jesus Christ during His life humbled Himself in obeying His Father, even to die on the Cross; which is as much as to say, as St. Anselm remarks, He humbled Himself so much that He could humble Himself no more; and therefore His divine Father, as a reward for the humility and obedience of His Son, raised Him to such a sublime dignity that there could be no higher : *God hath given him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth.*—(*Phil. ii.*, 9, 10). God gave Him a Name which is so great and powerful that it is venerated in Heaven, on earth, and in hell. A Name powerful in Heaven, because it can obtain all graces for us; powerful on earth, because it can save all who invoke it with devotion; powerful in hell, because this Name makes all the devils tremble. These rebel angels tremble at the sound of this most Sacred Name, because they remember that Jesus Christ was the Mighty One Who destroyed the dominion and power they formerly had over man. They tremble, says St. Peter Chrysologus, because at this Name they have to adore the whole majesty of God “In this Name the whole majesty of God is adored.” Our Saviour Himself said that through this powerful Name His disciples should cast out devils. *In my name they shall cast out devils.*—(*St. Mark xvi.*, 17). And in fact, the Church in her Exorcisms always makes use of this Name in driving out the infernal spirits from those who are possessed. And priests who are assisting persons dying call to their aid the Name of Jesus, to deliver them from the assaults of hell, which at that last moment are so terrible.

In the Life of St. Bernardine of Sienna, we see how many sinners the Saint converted, how many abuses he put an end to, and how many cities he sanctified, by trying, when he preached, to induce the people to invoke the Name of Jesus. St. Peter says that there is no other Name given to us by which we can find salvation but the ever blessed Name of Jesus : *For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be save* Acts iv., 12). Jesus is He Who has not only saved us, but continually preserves us from the danger of sin by His merits, each time we invoke Him with confidence: *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.*—(St. John xiv., 13).

In temptations, then, I repeat with St. Laurence Justinian, “whether you are tempted by the devil are attacked by men, invoke the Name of Jesus.” If the devils and men torment you and urge you to sin call on Jesus, and you will be delivered; and if temptations do not cease to persecute you, continue to invoke Jesus, and you will never fall. Those who practice this devotion have experienced that they keep themselves safe, and that they always come off victorious.

Let us always add the holy Name of Mary, which likewise terrible to hell, and we shall always be secure. “This short prayer—Jesus and Mary—is easy to remember,” says Thomas a Kempis, “and powerful to protect; is strong enough to deliver us from all the assaults of enemies.”

## THE NAME OF OUR SAVIOUR A NAME OF GREAT POWER.

### I

Consider that the Name *Jesus* signifies *Saviour*; and St. Peter—(Acts iv., 12)—assures us that the Eternal Father has not given to men any other Name by which they may be saved amidst the snares of this deceitful world, than the adorable Name of Jesus. It is this Name that makes the truth of Faith shine everywhere, and that calls all men from the abyss of darkness to the adorable light of the Gospel. It is by virtue of this adorable Name that the Apostle gave light to the blind, made the lame walk, healed the sick, raised the dead to life, and filled the whole world with wonder. And if the Angel at first announced that Jesus would bring life into the world by delivering it from the cruel slavery into which Adam had plunged it, this good Saviour confirmed this promise Himself when He declared that He had come so that His sheep might *have life, and might have it more abundantly.*—(St. John . x., 10). By virtue of His Name we see idolatry overthrown, to the great confusion of pagan princes and priests, who did all in their power to uphold it.

O amiable and Holy Name of Jesus, may the Seraphim of Heaven give Thee suitable thanks for me, and never cease to praise Thee by ever repeating that Thou dost merit all glory, all honour, and all power. My sweet Saviour, I hope to obtain, by virtue of Thy Name, the salvation of my body and soul; I hope that with this glorious Name in my heart and on my lips, victorious over the world and the flesh, I shall have the happiness to sing Thy praises and to bless the august Trinity for ever and ever.

### II.

Consider also the efficacy of the adorable Name of Jesus in making our prayers pleasing to God, and in obtaining all that we ask of Him. This Name opens for us the way to arrive promptly at the feet of the Most High and to have our prayers heard at once. The Gospel attests that the prayers of Jesus Himself have always been heard by virtue of His great Name, and that He authorizes us to say, when speaking to God: “ Our Father, Who art in Heaven.” In consideration of the Name of Jesus, God looks with a favourable eye upon our petition. For this reason Jesus exhorted the Apostles, and exhorts us all, that we should ask of the Father in His Name, in order to be sure that we shall obtain what we seek : *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.* — (St. John . xvi., 23). It is enough for Him to hear the petition, and He will bestow upon us the favours that have been asked of Him in the Name of His Beloved Son, with Whom He is well pleased, and Who, in order to satisfy His offended justice has shown Himself obedient even unto death.

We should, then, know how to profit by the efficacious power of the Holy Name of Jesus; being sure that our prayers will be heard, we should often, every hour of the day, repeat our prayers to the Eternal Father, and we shall advance in perfection on the road of the divine precepts, until we attain the happiness of seeing and possessing Him for all eternity in Heaven.

O Sweet Jesus, our Love and our Hope, since Thou hast deigned to assume mortal flesh, in order to open to us the gate of mercy, and to render our prayers efficacious by virtue of Thy glorious Name, grant that our prayers for the grace of perseverance may be heard, so that faithful to the Divine law to the end of our lives, we may, with Thy Holy Name on our lips, pass from this valley of tears to the glory of Paradise.

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