

Sermon for the Feast of the Circumcision on the Divine Name

by

Saint Thomas of Villanova

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The true perfection of a name, indeed its very essence, must consist in its similarity with and in its conformity to that which it is meant to represent. Now similarity is of two kinds, namely in sound and in meaning. Similarity in sound is such that the mere pronunciation of the word should manifest the nature of the thing named. This is why Plato says that speech is to some degree natural. A name is never imposed on something arbitrarily. One who wishes to give something a name that is appropriate, ought to consider the conformity of the sound of the word used with the thing that he wishes to represent—thus each and every thing has its own proper name.

The second similarity is that of meaning. Thus God gave to the firmament the name of *heaven*, which is derived from the Gothic *ham* meaning to cover or hide. We shall show later that the Name of Jesus possesses these two characteristics which is why it is said that “He was called by the name of Jesus” (Luke 2:21). If it is the fashion of the world to take into consideration these relationships, how much more so is it appropriate to God who has perfect understanding of the real similarities that exist between a thing and its name.

We do not find in Holy Scripture that God Himself gave the most blessed Virgin her name. However, He did accord this favor to Saint John the Baptist, and since we know that every prerogative and every privilege given to the saints has been equally given to Our Lady, we must assume that this same privilege was also given to her. In order to understand just how suitable the name of Mary is to the Virgin one should read St. Bernard’s second homily on the words of the Gospel: “an angel was sent... and the Virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:26-27). What an excellent source.

We shall consider two points. We shall speak first of the appropriateness and indeed of the perfect harmony of the Name of Jesus with that of Christ, and then we shall speak of the great excellence of this Name.

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, in the first chapter of his book on *The Divine Names*, says, “God is above all reason and all knowledge... and cannot be reached by any perception,¹ imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, apprehension, or understanding. How then is our discourse concerning the Divine Names to be accomplished, since we see that the Super-essential Godhead is unutterable and nameless?” Thus spoke Saint Dionysius.

Now, just as God is by His nature incomprehensible, so also is He ineffable. If He is above all reason, surely He is beyond all description. If the mind is unable to comprehend Him, how can we speak of Him? This is why Saint Thomas tells us that since only God can properly comprehend Himself, so only can God name Himself.² God begot Himself, and in this begetting was a designation established, for *The Son* is a name which completely expresses the Divine Substance. Thus Isaiah says that “the Name of the Lord comes from afar” (Isaiah 30:27) and a gloss adds that this name is that of The Son. In the times that followed, God had no name as such upon the earth—and indeed when Jacob asked the Lord “What is Your Name?,” the Lord rebuked him for this question and said “Why do you ask my Name ?” (Gen. 32:27, 29). My Name is admirable, or rather ineffable; My Name is secret and unutterable—all this after the words of Saint Dionysius.

Thus the Name of God is nameless, just as its praise consists of respectful silence—for the Psalm says: “silence is the praise that we owe to you” (Ps. 65:1). This is explained in another verse of the Psalms: “according to Thy Name, O God, so also is Thy praise” (Ps. 48:10). There is no higher praise than silence, for as Saint Dionysius says: it is an “unknowing” greater than all knowledge, a silence greater than and above all speech, an insufficiency greater than any force. The words of the psalmist apply to this when he says “my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord” (Ps. 84:2). You will then have an appropriate knowledge of God only when you realize that you know nothing of Him. You will speak appropriately of the Divine Majesty only when your words lead you to keep silence. This is why Saint Augustine asks, after speaking of God and of His glorious Trinity: have we said anything truly worthy of the dignity of God? I only wish I could say what I feel. That which I have said is not what I wished to say. I know this because I know that God is ineffable, and if what I said was ineffable, I would not be able to say it.³

Despite the fact that God is ineffable and unnamable, and because of His desire that we should have a Name by which to invoke Him—since he says “all men who invoke His Name shall be saved” (Acts 2:21), He has wished to be called by several names. Thus, again according to Saint Dionysius, He is called Principle, Savior, God, Goodness, Truth, Light, Life, Wisdom,

¹ Translations of the Scriptures are whenever possible taken from the Douay version. Translations of Saint Dionysius are collated with C. E. Rolt’s translation published by S.P.C.K.

² St. Thomas 1st sent. dist. 22, art. 1.

³ Augustine, *De Doct. Christ.*, lib. 1, cap. 6.

Charity, etc., etc., and again The Lamb, The Lion, The Cornerstone, The Sun, The Morning Star, Fire, etc., etc., and thus He who has no name is called by many names.

God, wishing to show the infinite ocean of His essence said to Saint John Damascene that “He who has no name has taken the name of all beings in order to show that He is above all, that He is all in all, and following the words of Saint Paul, that He contains and perfects all creation.”⁴

Hence, God who has no created name, has taken all names, and among these some are given Him in a metaphorical sense, such as Lamb, Lion, Cornerstone, Sun; others in their real sense according to the reality of things, and not in the manner that we understand. Thus God is really The Life, The Light, but not in the sense of life or light or charity as we understand. He is far beyond what our poor minds can conceive. How could we understand Him with our limitations? This is why His qualities are never expressed in terms of size or weight. In the true worship of God one cannot represent to oneself anything specific, but rather an “unknowing” which is the denial of all thought. “When we see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2) we will attest with all our might that we had no true thought of Him, that we understood nothing of His essence, and we will be able to affirm this because the darkness of the times will have disappeared and the truth have been manifested to us.

Now God in His essential nature is ineffable and has no name. When He abases Himself in taking on the coils of our infirmities; when he manifests Himself in finite limits, He appears carrying a Name. In former times, just as He had no image or shape, following the words of the prophet: “How can we give Him an image?” (Deut. 4:15), so also He had no name. When He appeared in mortal flesh, He received both a shape and a Name, both a figure under which we could represent Him and a Name through which we could invoke Him. And what is this Name? Hear the Gospel: “and He was called by the Name of Jesus.”

Before showing you the greatness of this Name, let us recall the circumstances under which the Divine Infant was called Jesus. Listen again to the Gospel: “when eight days were fulfilled for His circumcision, His Name was called Jesus” (Luke 2:21). Who is this Infant? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and by Him all things were made” (John 1:1-3). Who is this Infant? It is He who established the heavens and who created the angels.

Who is this Infant? It is He whose Will governs all things. Such is this Infant who is circumcised on this day.

And why should He be circumcised? What in you O Good Jesus is so base and so foul that you have need of being raised up? You have not committed any evil act, nor is there the slightest stain of sin attached to you. You cannot be subject to sin for it is written “He did no sin, neither was deceit in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). You have never been touched by what is sordid, and indeed, I ask: how could you possibly have been? You have a father, but this father is God. You

⁴ St. J. Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, book 1, Chap. 15.

have a mother, but this mother is the Blessed Virgin. Moreover it is written that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness” (1 John 1:5). The Holy Virgin, herself conceived Immaculate, could hardly pass on to you (original) sin which was not innate in her. You are the most high priest O Lord, and because of your father and your mother, you are without blemish. Why then is there the necessity of circumcising this Infant? O pious Virgin, and you O Joseph, what are you doing by circumcising this Infant? Is it that you are afraid of the scriptural curse falling on him: “the male, whose flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people” (Gen. 17:14)? Is He not the one through whom all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed? Or is it that you are afraid that, the sign of circumcision being a distinguishing mark, the heavenly Father might fail to recognize Him without it? But surely, being circumcised, He would only be more obscure. Ah! I understand, I confess O Lord that here is my Savior, the divine physician that cures my sickness; He takes upon Himself the illness that the patient might be healed. The head receives the crown of thorns that the members of the body might be saved.

But there is something else my brothers, that causes me the greatest astonishment and admiration. “After eight days were fulfilled for his circumcision, His Name was called Jesus” (Luke 2:21). What is this? The Infant is circumcised and at the same time He is called Jesus. What connection is there between this circumcision and the title of Savior? Surely there is something about this that is repugnant. How can we place side by side the hanging of a thief and the coronation of an emperor, the disgrace of a crown of thorns with the scepter of royalty? Imagine any normal person walking down the street with a hangman’s noose around his neck and a king’s crown on his head; with the stigmata of the nail on one hand and the scepter of royalty in the other... but it is in just this manner, as St. Bernard tells us, that God unites at one and the same time divine and human things, matters of the highest and at the same time of the most humble origin.⁵ He is born of a woman, but of a Virgin; He is hidden in a crib, but at the same time illuminated by a heavenly star. Why is all this?

That you might not in seeing the greatness of the divine, misunderstand the weakness of the flesh; and that in recognizing this frailty you will be able, following the words of Saint Leo, to understand that He is true man. “If then you are tempted to mistake this Infant for other than He is, because he is hidden in a stable, look up to the star in the sky that shows Him for what He is to the world. If on the other hand you wish to join the angels in offering to Him your worship and adoration, consider the diapers in which He is wrapped. In the same manner, when you see today this infant being circumcised, recognize in Him a descendant of Abraham; when you hear that He is given the Name of Jesus, which is part of your confession of faith, recognize in Him the veritable Son of God...”⁶

Hence it follows that in this circumcised Infant we see a true son of Abraham, and in the Savior, we recognize a true Son of God. O my Savior, that you should reveal yourself in such a

⁵ St. Bernard, *De Circum. Dom.* 2.

⁶ St. Leo, sermon 33, chap. 3.

way! Oh, how greatly did you humble yourself for us! It was not enough for you to humiliate yourself by assuming the form of a servant; you went even farther and assumed the form of a sinner. After eight days we say: “He differs in no way from a slave, though He is master of all” (Gal. 4:1), and today we can add that He differs in no way from a sinner, though He is the one through whom our sins are forgiven. Though He is only a little less than the angels, today He is manifested as being very much below them. Though formerly we said that “He spoke with man” (Baruch 3:38), today we say “He was reputed with the wicked” (Isaiah). Formerly it was nature that imprinted her image on Him, and now it is sin. Formerly “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), and now “He is made to be sin who knew nothing of sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). Think well upon these words: “What shall I do O Ephraim? What shall I do to thee, O Juda?” (Hosea 6:4). Hence, that we should not misunderstand the circumcising of this Infant, He was at the same time “called by the Name of Jesus.”

Now we shall demonstrate the two analogies spoken of earlier concerning the sound and the meaning of the Name of Jesus, a Name so very appropriate to God. The authority of Him who gave this Name should be enough to convince us, for if, as it says in Genesis, “the name Adam gave to any living creature, the same is its name” (Gen. 2:19), and if a man under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is able to give to each thing its appropriate name, surely God the Father can give to His Son a Name that is most appropriate.

We shall see in just what this appropriateness consists. Let us note that the Name of Jesus is not the name of Christ in so far as He is God only, nor in so far as He is merely man. Rather it is a Name given to one who in Himself unites both divine and human nature.

And with regard to this, there is in the word itself, in its very construction as a name, a great analogy with that of the Christ. Just as Christ is one but has two natures, so also the Name is one but has two syllables. Just as the inferior nature of Jesus Christ, His human nature, has two parts, the body and the soul, so does the first syllable of His Name have two letters. As His superior nature has three parts, the Blessed Trinity, so also does the second syllable of His Name have three letters. The Son is engendered in the bosom of the Divine Essence, and the Holy Spirit is the link, the sacred bond between the Father and the Son; thus, as Saint Augustine says concerning the second syllable of His Name, two letters that are similar are united by a third one placed between them.

Moreover, Jesus means Redeemer. What do the five letters of this unique Name signify if not the five wounds of the unique Redeemer. This is only one of the many possible analogies; for there are many other mysterious implications that we are ignorant of and which would further show us how appropriate this Name is for God. This is why the glorious and blessed Name of Jesus was given to the most divine Majesty.

Second, we shall also find in this Name the analogy of meaning. Jesus, we have said, means Savior. Now in the term Savior there are two things to be considered, namely the Power and the Remedy—the power to save and the remedy of salvation. These two qualities result from the

dual nature of Christ. The first, His human nature, gives the remedy; the second, His divine nature, gives efficacy to the remedy. Christ suffered in so far as He was human; He is raised up and heard in so far as He is God. It is the man who is tied, beaten and crucified; it is the God that gives these sufferings an infinite merit and power to save. In a word, “He is heard because of the respect due Him” (Heb. 5:7). And why is respect due to Him? Is it not because He is God? As it says in the Psalms: “as one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled” (Ps. 35:14), but the psalmist hastens to add “I put in Him my trust, as in a brother or a friend” (Ps. 35:13). Thus it is that it is in His flesh, and because of His humanity that the Savior suffered, but all the merit and efficacy of these sufferings that work for our salvation come from His divinity. If He did not have in Him a divine nature, how could his sufferings be salvatory? If He did not have a human nature, how could this suffering be agreeable to God? These two natures must exist in Jesus Christ. Consequently, in order to show that these two natures are united in a single person, a single and unique Name is given to the Savior, and this Name is appropriate to Him. It is the Name that the Gospel teaches us when it says “He was called by the Name of Jesus”

We shall now demonstrate the excellence of this Name of Jesus.

We shall enumerate three, a number so low that it will be easy for us to remember them.

The first excellence: The eternal greatness of this Name is shown by the fact that it was pre-figured in the old law and announced by the prophets. It was in a special way announced when God spoke to Moses from the midst of the fiery bush. At that time He showed Moses that this Name was contained in that of God, in Jehovah, which one writes in almost the same way, and which up to that time God had not revealed to any mortal. Listen to God’s words : I am the Lord that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob by the name of God Almighty and my name Jehovah I did not show them” (Exod. 6:2-3). See here the great value God places on His Name. He did not even reveal it to Abraham, one of His most intimate friends. God said further concerning His Name: “this is my Name for ever and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exod. 3:15).

We shall explain these words and see just why it is that His Name is His memorial, His Name for all eternity. This passage of Scripture conforms to the words of the Psalms where it says “Lord, Your Name is for all eternity; it will be as a memorial from generation to generation” (Ps. 135:13).

Our Lord is our Savior and will be for all eternity; and this not only for us, men inhabiting the world, but even more so and with greater reason, for the blessed in Heaven. There they see His glory which their merits have made available to them; they see the endless torments that they have escaped; they see the dangers that their sins have exposed them to; they see the wounds of the Redeemer, all glowing brilliantly, which have allowed them to escape these dangers; indeed, they see themselves inundated with the light of these wounds, which causes them to progress from splendor to splendor and transforms them in His own image. Living in tranquility; they sing the praises of Him who has snatched them from so much evil and filled them with so many

blessings. O Lord, cry some, what did you find in me that made me worthy of so much help? O Lord, if your mercy had not assisted me “my soul would almost have been condemned to the everlasting fire” (Ps. 94:17), to reside in the midst of groans, of flames, of everlasting torment. Here in heaven one always repeats, always invokes and always honors the Name of Jesus. Here in heaven one knows all the truth and all the strength of this Name. Consequently the Name of the Savior “is for all eternity.”

This Name is also a memorial that goes on from generation to generation, until the end of time. He withdrew Himself from our presence, but He left behind His Name as a remembrance. When a faithful wife hears the name of her husband she shakes with emotion and lets her tears well forth. Oh Lord, do we have for you this love, this tender faithfulness? When we congratulate ourselves on loving you, our words are a lie, for our evil hearts are only lukewarm and forgetful.

In the course of time, after having wished in the Old Law that His most sacred Name should receive only a respectful silence by way of homage, the Lord came into the world and now wishes that all should speak forth His Name. With regard to this, consider the words of Isaiah: “therefore my people shall know my Name in that day: for I Myself that spoke, behold I am here” (Is. 52:6). It is as if He said: as long as I was in heaven and no one could attain to me or touch me, I did not wish that my Name should be on soiled lips. But now that I have placed my being into the hands of sinners, I no longer disdain to see my Name on their lips. I deliver Myself up unto death for you, and I no longer wish for my Name a respectful silence. No, indeed, dispose of my Name as you have disposed of my body. And this in fact is what has come about. Formerly no one of the people dared to pronounce the Name of God, and now on all sides, at all times of the day, saints and sinners, everywhere and always acclaim it and repeat it. Now every nation, every sex, every age and people in all stations of life “call upon the Name of Jesus.”

The second excellence of this Name is that God Himself, with His own mouth, has given it to God. It was not given by a mother, not given by an angel; it was our Father in heaven that created and gave this Name to His Son. And further, the Father did not give His Son a name meaning Judge, or Revenger or Zealous. He gave Him a Name meaning Savior. The most Blessed Virgin brought Him into the world, but our celestial Father gave Him His Name. Thus it is that the Holy Spirit says to us in the Gospel that “He was called by the Name of Jesus,” a Name that the angels called Him “before He was conceived in the womb of Mary” (Luke 2:21). The Holy Spirit says that He was called by the Name of Jesus, not that He was given this Name, for it is written in Isaiah: “Thou shalt be called by a new Name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isaiah 62:2).

God the Father, as we have said, knew what Name was most suitable, most proportionate and most appropriate for His Son; this was the Name Jesus by which He called Him. Hear how the angel explains the reason for this Name. “For He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). May your Name, dear Jesus, increase my confidence. You are my Jesus, O Lord, you are my Jesus. Understand well this Name of Jesus that your Father has given you.

Save me Jesus for I am enslaved and a captive to the bonds of my sins. The chains of my crimes and iniquities encompass me and strangle me; I recognize what I am. And You also Lord Jesus, recognize who it is You are. Who did You come to save? Was it not mankind, confused and enslaved? After all, who else is in need of being saved?

Even though I have repeatedly denied You, You remain faithful to your Name—You cannot deny this Name. O my brothers, run and hasten to follow in the footsteps of the Lord; fear not to approach Him with confidence, for He is called by the Name of Jesus. He is the Savior and will not reject those whom He ought to save. If a man is condemned to hell, it is not because he has sinned, but rather because he has rejected this so abundant and certain source of salvation. Have confidence and invoke His Name, for “whosoever invokes His Name shall be saved” (Acts 2:21), if he invokes it with sincerity and in the plenitude of his heart. Thus we have again in the words of the psalmist, that “those that have hope in You are those who invoke Your Name.” And why? Because they know Your Name and if they are not blind and stupid, they clearly see that in spite of their confusion and their misery, You O Lord open the way of salvation to them. “For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, but rather that the world might be saved by Him” (John 3:17). He has taken a Name suitable to His task and His mission a Name that inspires hope in the sinner to approach, not a Judge, not an Avenger, but Jesus, a Savior, an Intercessor and a Redeemer. “I will rest then in my Savior; I will approach Him in all confidence” (Ps. 11:6).⁷ Why? Because He is called by the Name of Jesus.

You are the Truth, O Lord, and Your actions are never in discord with Your Name. Why then do You have the Name of Savior? Why do You call Yourself merciful if You have nothing but condemnations to pronounce on those who beseech Your mercy? No God, You are unable to either pretend or lie. You are such as You are called. You call yourself Jesus, and therefore You are a Jesus to us. Bring yourself close, O sinner, to Jesus, for He is only called Jesus because He is come to “save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). If the people are in sin, Jesus will wash away their offences and purify their souls. Why are you afraid? There is nothing harsh, stein or terrible about the Name of Jesus. It is all sweetness and delight. Listen to the spouse in the Song of Songs: “Your Name is like oil poured forth” (Song of Solomon 1:3). It is a soothing balm, not vinegar. It is poured forth, not enclosed. If the wounds of your sins cause pain; if the pangs of your conscience torture you; if remorse torments you, you have only to come near, for the oil of His Name will refresh you, bind your wounds, and its sweetness will relieve your pain, for “the yoke will putrify at the presence of the oil” (Is. 10:27).

Oil, says St. Bernard, gives light, nourishes and sweetens. So does the Name of Jesus. It gives light when it is preached. It nourishes when one meditates upon it. It sweetens when it is invoked⁸ The Name is truly an oil, but in what manner can we say it is poured forth? Let us

⁷ Editor’s Note: We have been unable to verify the accuracy of this scriptural citation. Since we do not have access to any original manuscripts, we have left this citation as it was submitted by the translator.

⁸ St. Bernard, Sermon 15 in *Cant.* 5.

recall what we have already said. Under the Old Law, when Moses asked of God His Name, a voice replied saying “I am HE WHO IS, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.” But Lord, are You not also the God of all men? Are You not the God of the heavens and of the whole earth? Why do You limit Yourself to these three people? Surely in doing so You diminish the greatness of Your Name. You are limiting it to the confines of the Old Covenant.

Your Name is an immense sea, more vast than the oceans, and You are, as it were, enclosing it within the limits of a vase. God, sings the psalmist, is known throughout Judea, “His Name is great in Israel” (Ps. 76:1). Yes, it is great, but the Jewish people are few. What then? The oil is poured forth that it might flow over all the nations. We have no other desire, indeed it is our only prayer, that “we should eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy Name” (Is. 4:1).

But how is this oil to be poured forth? Is it not by means of breaking the vase? And who is to break it? Listen to this mystery: the fools, scribes and Pharisees have said: “come let us put wood on the bread, and cut him off from the land of the living, and let his name be remembered no more” (Jer. 11:19). Fools! they wish to diminish the greatness of this Name. They wish to close in the oil by means of breaking the vase. Why break the vessel if you do not wish the oil to be poured forth? Did you not know that while He was still alive, the Savior was enclosed within the limits of mortality just as oil is enclosed within the limits of a vase? But when His mortal body clothed itself in immortality, and when His wounds were opened, the oil poured forth upon the entire earth and on all mankind.

Thanks are to be rendered to You O Lord! “Your Name is poured forth” from sea to sea as a river flowing to the very ends of the earth (Ps. 72:8), and on to the whole face of the universe. Now all creation can cry forth: “He is called by the Name of Jesus.”

Now a third consideration shows us how excellent is the Name of Jesus, and that is its efficacy. A lame person was seated at the gate of the temple, called the Gate of Beauty. Peter came and said to him “In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth get up and walk” (Act. 3:6), and at once “his legs were healed, and he jumped up and praised God.” Druisane was dead, and had been laid in the tomb. Saint John said to him “May the Lord Jesus Christ return you to life,” and at once, he who was dead was living.

What could be more powerful than this Name? What could be more efficacious? At the sound of this Name the dead are revived, the lame walk, the blind see and the sick are healed. What power in a Name! Consider these miracles, and others no less great, no less startling, that are accomplished by virtue of this Name. Henceforth who can dare to mention this powerful and most sacred Name without fear, and without respect? At the sound of this Name the angels bow down, men bend their knees and demons tremble. This Name puts Satan to flight, reduces the violence of temptations, and pierces heaven to obtain every grace, for our Lord has said that

“whatever you ask in My Name, that will I do in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:14), and again I say it, “whatever you ask in My Name, I will do it.”

What a great respect we should have for this Name! How great a punishment is deserved by those who have the audacity and temerity to blaspheme the Name of God, to take it in vain or to pronounce it without respect.

If it is true that we all of us have an inclination towards sin, it is also true that all beings have the desire to give praise to God. Nothing is able to force the soul to dishonor the Name of God, for it is against the soul’s nature to blaspheme. It is a sin without pleasure and hence a most atrocious offence.

Let me also say that certain sins partake of the nature of animals, such as sins of the flesh; others are appropriate to the nature of man, such as the sins of ambition or cupidity. But as for blaspheming, this is a truly diabolical sin, following the words of Isaiah “he curses his king and his God” (Is. 8:21). This is a sin that deserves to be punished even by the judges of this world, for he who does not fear to dishonor his God can only deserve our condemnation. Enough on this point.

One further point and we will finish this sermon. A certain passage in Isaiah filled St. Bernard with astonishment. Joyous and trembling with happiness, the prophet cried out “for A CHILD IS BORN TO US, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6). Names so full of grandeur, but where is “the Name above all names” (Philippians 2:9)? Why does the prophet forget this most illustrious Name? Saint Augustine said that nothing pleased him in his reading when he failed to read the Name of Jesus. What displeased him most in the books of the Gentiles was that one never found in them the Name of Jesus. What then? Must one think that Isaiah forgot to mention this most sacred Name, the Name so very appropriate to God? No, certainly not. All other names of God are but an explanation of the Name of Jesus. They are expressions of the Divine Reality of this Name. As Saint Bernard says in his discourse on the Name of Jesus:⁹ in the Name of Jesus are encompassed all the other names that are given to God. Here then, from beginning to end, is the second sermon on the feast of the circumcision.

Translator’s Note

The Feast of the Circumcision and the Feast of the Holy Name are celebrated together on January 1st, and are considered to be a Feast of Holy Obligation. As such it ranks with such Feasts as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, and no Catholic without adequate reason may fail to celebrate them without pain of mortal sin.

⁹ Saint Bernard, Sermon 2, in *De Circum. Dom.* 4.

As the original Latin was unavailable to me, the translation is taken from the French of Father V. Ferrier, published in 1866 (Lethielleux, Paris).

St. Thomas of Villanova was born at Fuentellana in Spain in 1488 and died as Archbishop of Valencia in 1555. He studied at the University of Alcala and became a licentiate in theology. When he was offered the chair of the professor of Philosophy at the University of Salamanca, he declined the post and entered the Augustinian friars. He was beatified by Paul V in 1618 and canonized by Alexander VII in 1658.

His writings consist almost entirely of his sermons, which to the best of my knowledge have not been translated into English.