

“YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN”

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Reading: Psalm 86; *Divine Providence* 230:1-2

*Teach me Your way, O Lord;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name (Psalm 86:11).*

We just read from the Word that we are to glorify the Lord’s name and hold it in holy fear. What does this mean? Does it mean we are to be afraid of using the Lord’s name? No! We use the Lord’s name all the time when we worship Him and talk about Him. When it says we are to fear the Lord’s name, it means we are to use His many names only in holy ways—good ways. We *should* be afraid to use it in bad ways—afraid because when we use the Lord’s names in wrong ways we close our minds to the Lord and shut Him out.

As you know the Lord has many names—Jehovah, Savior, Jesus Christ, Almighty God, Redeemer, and many others. Each of these names is holy. Why? Because each of these names stands for some wonderful quality in the Lord—His love, His wisdom, His saving power, His Human Nature which He made Divine, His merciful desire to bring us to heaven, His kindness, fairness and strength. All these qualities are meant by the Lord’s names. It is by using these names in good ways that we show the Lord that we love and honor Him.

This is why we are commanded, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). This means we are never to use the Lord’s names in cursing. We are never to use His names when we are telling lies and trying to convince people we are telling the truth. We are never to use His names in jokes. Cursing, and false use of the Lord’s names, and joking are all *vain*. This means that they are empty of holiness. It is wrong to do these things. If we do them, then we have lost our innocence for a time; we have lost our willingness to be led by the Lord.

Why is it a sin to take the Lord’s name in vain? When we use any of His names wrongly, we are really saying that we don’t care about the Lord. We are saying that we don’t care about His love for us, or about His truth, or His Word, or any of the Lord’s qualities of mercy and kindness, nor about His gentle leading of us.

Maybe you haven’t thought about it in this way. But if you think about it you will see that it is true. So we should try really hard to use the Lord’s names only in good ways. We should pray to the Lord, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.”

Sometimes people think that it is “smart” or “cool” to say the Lord’s names in swearing or in jokes. Nothing could be further from the truth! Taking the Lord’s name in vain is not a sign of being “grownup.” It is a sign of being very immature. What could be more foolish than telling the Lord that we don’t care about Him?

Now, if we have gotten into the bad habit of using the Lord's name in wrong ways, what can we do about it? First, we can ask the Lord's forgiveness. Second, we can promise Him that we will really try not to do it again. Third, we can ask Him to give us strength to break this bad habit. And then we can use His strength, which He will surely give us, to break this bad habit—shunning it as a sin against the Lord.

We have many wonderful teachings about the Lord's names which stand for His many Divine qualities. And so we have a great responsibility to keep the Lord's names very holy. With love to the Lord, let us keep His Commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain." Let us ask the Lord to teach us His ways so that we can walk in His truth and so unite our heart to fear His name.

Amen.