

# THERE IS NO OTHER NAME

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Homily for the Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene, July 22, 2011

Exod. 20:1-17, Ps. 18, John 20:1-2, 11-18

“And God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me’” (Exod. 20:1-3).

The revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses and the Israelites on Mount Sinai was a very important stage in God’s special revelation to the world. Although God reveals himself in a general way to all peoples and cultures (Rom. 1:19-20), he revealed himself to Israel in a special way, for Israel was his own people, the chosen people, whom he prepared by this special revelation for the coming of the Messiah. Through the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, this special revelation will be brought to the entire world by the mission of the Church for the salvation of all who believe in him.

It is an error to think that all God’s revelation—both general and special—is equal, that all religions are equal, and that the mission of the Church is only dialogue between religions, in which each person shares what his religion believes, what each person in the dialogue has experienced, and the meaning that each religion has for each individual. Yes, we may and should dialogue and share personally in this way, and we can learn much from other religions (See my article, “Hindu Asceticism,” on my website [[www.DailyBiblicalSermons.com](http://www.DailyBiblicalSermons.com)] under: Other Writings/Asceticism), for God has revealed himself in a general way in each one of them. But it is a great error to reduce the mission of the Church to this, and to works of charity, to social action for a better world, and to struggling against political and economic oppression. The Church in its mission to the world does all these things, but its mission cannot be reduced only to these things, for the very heart and soul of the mission of the Church is proclamation; that is, proclaiming the ultimate salvation which God has sent to the world in his only Son Jesus Christ.

While each people group and each religion has its own general revelation, which is for them, and which they can share with us and with others, the Church has the commission of Christ to preach and proclaim God’s special revelation, given to Israel and in his Son Jesus Christ, to the whole world, to every people group and culture (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47-48). General revelation and special revelation are not equal. They are not on the same level. The special revelation of God to Israel and in Christ is far greater and far more

important. It is God's ultimate revelation to the entire world; and it is the mission of the Church to bring this special revelation to each people group and culture for their salvation.

It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that man is saved (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). We know this with certainty. We also know that Christ gave to his Church the obligation and the commission to make him known to all for their salvation. We do not know by what means God can bring to the faith in Christ necessary for salvation those who do not know him; he has not revealed this to us. But yes, we do know that the Church has the mission and the obligation to make Christ known to all peoples.

Therefore, despite the fact that the Church does other things, such as interreligious dialogue, social action, works of charity, and opposition to political and economic oppression and injustice; the very heart of its mission is to preach Christ to all, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So it is, for Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "He who believes in the son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" (John 3:36). "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" (1 John 5:12). "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [*ethnē*, i.e. peoples], baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).