

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A)
MAY 3, 2026

The Great “I AM”

My Brothers and Sisters, the Month of May is a significant month in the spiritual life of God’s Church. It is sometimes referred to as Mary’s Month, when our devotion to the Blessed Mother is particularly noted. In this month Mary is crowned with a wreath of flowers indicating that she is our heavenly queen who intercedes on our behalf with her Son Jesus. Families are encouraged to construct a “May Altar” in their homes with a statue of the Virgin Mary on it along with other votives associated with her.

May 1st was the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. In the eyes of our world Joseph would not fit the description of a great man of accomplishments, but he was the perfect man chosen by God for the specific purpose of protecting and providing for the Holy Family, and chief among them was the god-man Jesus, the great “I AM”. We see in the Litany of St. Joseph that God “put him in charge of all that he owned”, reminiscent of Joseph the youngest son of Jacob while in Egypt (Gen 41:41-46). In all of our needs we should place ourselves into the hands of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As we turn to today’s Gospel we notice some unique characteristics in the reading. Jesus will place Himself in the person of “I am” several times (Jn 14:1-12). The description of “I am” hearkens back to the Book of Exodus where Moses is in the presence of the burning bush (Gen 3:13-15). From the burning bush Moses hears the voice of God speaking to him. Moses asks for God’s name, and the name God gives for Himself is “I AM Who I Am”, or YHWH in Hebrew (CCC 205-208). This name describes God as having existed without beginning or end. He is God who is complete in Himself in all ways and is dependent on no one or anything.

The significance of today’s passage is perhaps how often Jesus uses this term “I am” in reference to Himself in a time when His own disciples do to yet recognize or understand that Jesus is Divine, that He is God (CCC 422-483). Jesus said to Thomas, “If you really knew me you would know my Father also.” Jesus will go on at length to describe to His disciples the unity or oneness (consubstantial) between Himself and the Father.

In this particular biblical translation, Jesus uses, “I am” seven times. The number seven itself has significance. Seven in scripture means completeness or perfection. An apt description of the divine being. Jesus said:

- I am going to prepare a place for you.
- So that where I am you also may be.
- Where I am going, you know the way.
- I am the way the truth and the life.
- Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
- Believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.
- I am going to the Father.

In addition to this particular passage the entire Gospel of John has seven places where Jesus distinctively uses the “I AM” phrase in reference to Himself:

- I AM the Bread of Life.
- I AM the Light of the world.
- I AM the Door of the sheep.
- I AM the Good Shepherd.
- I AM the Resurrection and the Life.
- I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- I AM the Vine, you are the branches.

We are in the Easter Season. It is a time when we continually reflect back upon our Lord’s Resurrection on Easter Sunday. The Power of Jesus’ Resurrection is connected directly to the identity of Jesus as God, the great “I AM Who I AM”. It is only through the power of God that we will share in His Resurrection to eternal life. But in order to share in His Resurrection we must believe in Jesus as God, as “I AM”.

Jesus said to the Jews that “before Abraham was, I AM”. They understood exactly what Jesus was saying, how He was describing Himself as God. So they picked up stones to throw at Him for blasphemy (Jn 8:58-59) (CCC 473, 490).

May the 2nd is the Memorial of St. Athanasius who fought the Arian heresy which stated that Jesus was not divine and is a heresy specifically addressed in the Council of Nicaea resulting in the Nicene Creed where the nature of Jesus as divine is delineated. Why this focus on the particular elements of the Gospel that point to Jesus’ Divinity? Because if Jesus isn’t Divine:

- Then His Resurrection didn’t really happen as scripture describes, and we are not saved.
- Then His words in John chapter 6 are not true where He said “Unless you eat my Flesh and drink my Blood you have no life in you.”
- Then the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper have no significance when He said “Take and eat, this is my Body.” “Take and drink, this is my blood.”

Only God can proclaim these realities. I recommend that we all go back and reread today’s Gospel and imagine that Jesus is speaking to each of us directly, because in reality He truly is speaking to each of us. Do we believe that:

- Jesus and the Father are one?
- Jesus is the Way Truth and Life?
- Jesus is the Light of the World?
- That Jesus is the Bread of Life, the True Vine, and the Good Shepherd?

Jesus said that He was going to the Father. He wants to take us with Him. But we must first believe that He is our God, the great “I AM” (Jn 8:24). Faith is the key that opens the door to eternal life with Jesus.

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church