

## **CIRCUMCISION / CHRISTMAS II 2016**

**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**

**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**

**PHILIPPIANS 2.9 LUKE 2.15**



Christmas decorations are disappearing from stores and malls. After-Christmas sales are in full swing. And decorations for the next big Hallmark event...Valentine's Day...have appeared.

Surprise! It's still Christmas. If we stop for a moment and get off the roller coaster ride that defines secular Christmas...we begin to understand the Twelve Days of Christmas is more than a cute song about our true love giving us a partridge in a pear tree.

The Twelve Days of the Christmas Season, as Father John pointed out in his sermon on this day last year, provide a rich menu for our learning...IF we are among willing students! Let's be those willing students!

January 1 is called the Circumcision of Christ in the *Book of Common Prayer*. More recently it is called Holy Name Day. Christmas and Holy Name Day are inextricably connected...it is right and proper we celebrate the Holy Name of Jesus today during these Twelve Days of Christmas.

What's does the name of Jesus tell us about him? We know each other by our names. That means we actually know something about each other...who we are...and often what we do. If we start talking to the person sitting next to us on the plane...we can choose to remain anonymous. If we introduce ourselves to each other by name...we have established a relationship with each other...we know each other's names...and maybe learn something about each other. It makes for a much more pleasant plane ride.

The Gospel tells us Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple eight days after his birth to be circumcised...what the Book of Genesis required parents to do for male children. It was also at this time they called his Name, JESUS...GOD SAVES! Because we know the Name of Jesus, we know who he is...God's Son...and what he does...he saves us.

Knowing a person's name and knowing what he does means we have a certain "ownership" of that person. It's not an ownership of property, like a car, a house, a boat, or clothes. Because we know a person's

name and know what he does, we "own" a part of his life. We "own" the Name of Jesus because we experience who he is and what he does for us in our lives.

We know our friends' names and they know ours. That makes us very much a part of each other's lives. We share our joys and sorrows as though we were part of one family...and we are...God's family. We share our Faith in God and the love Jesus shows us, and that helps us grow every day of our lives.

Saint Paul tells us that God our Father has given us the greatest name ever, the Name of Jesus himself. We "own" the Name of Jesus from the moment we are baptized...in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

We were given our names when we were baptized. We "own" the Name of Jesus because through our baptisms we became members of the Church...the Body of Christ...and that makes each of us connected to each other in a powerful and mystical union.

Having the Name of Jesus imprinted in our hearts and minds means we should always strive to act in a way that is pleasing to God and does not hurt others. Saint Paul tells us to "work our own salvation out in fear and trembling". What he is saying is that part of our responsibility as Christians...those who "own" the Name of Jesus...is to try to figure out what God wants us to do with our lives, and then do just that.

While we are still in the Christmas Season let's continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus...we don't need to be in such a rush to take down the Christmas tree or put the crèche away. Remember the Magi are coming in a few days with their own special gifts for Jesus.

About the Twelve Days of Christmas...it is not overly sentimental to see God is our True Love and he has given us the greatest gift ever...his Son JESUS...whose name is GOD SAVES!

