

**THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST 2017**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**PHIL. 2.9-13 ST. LUKE 2.15-21**



And they named him...JESUS...GOD SAVES!

During a recent trip to Texas, the person sitting next to me on the plane looked somewhat like John Wayne in a 10-gallon hat. We had a friendly conversation and introduced ourselves by our names. We were no longer just passengers in 6A and 6B traveling through the skies in a metal tube at 450 miles per hour. We knew at least something about each other...our names.

Names are important. We know each other by our names. Names are how we identify each other and they go a long way in establishing personal relationships with each other. We can often learn something about a person by his or her name.

My parents named me Craig Patrick when I was born. *Craig* is of Celtic origin and means *rock*. *Patrick* is of English origin and means *noble*. So my name means...*noble rock*...I get the *rock* part...I'm not so sure about the *noble* part.

In the Epistle, Saint Paul tells us that God has given us the greatest name ever...the Name above all names...the Name of Jesus. The Name of Jesus is so great "all beings in heaven, on earth and in the world below will fall on their knees, and openly proclaim the Name of Jesus.

When we genuflect...bend the right knee...during the Nicene Creed at Mass...we are showing we believe God became a human being like us...and his name is Jesus. We know Jesus by his name. It's the Name above every other name...JESUS...means GOD SAVES!

We get the Name of Jesus implanted in our hearts and minds and souls from the moment we are baptized...in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We have a certain "ownership" of the Name of Jesus because through our baptisms we became members of the Church...the Body of Christ.

*The Book of Common Prayer* entitles January 1st...The Circumcision of Christ. This is also the Octave Day...the Eighth Day...of Christmas. Yes...we are still celebrating Christmas. Let's wish each other a Merry Christmas if we haven't already done so.

Coincident with the physical act of circumcision is NAMING...in accordance with The Law and direct instructions to Joseph...hence, in more contemporary pragmatic practice...January 1<sup>st</sup> is called *Holy Name Day*. The reality...2000 years later we know *God Saves* rather than "God is Circumcised."

Jeremiah taught the people the physical act of circumcision didn't put people right with God. What was needed was a radical change of the heart. For the covenant...the special relationship between God and man...to mean anything...our hearts must be motivated by love of God and our neighbor.

Saint Paul says much the same thing in his Letter to the Philippians when he tells us to "keep on working with fear and trembling to complete our salvation." What he is saying is we have the responsibility to give God more than lip service. We "own" the Name of Jesus...and that means trying to figure out what God wants us to do with our lives, and then do just that.

Our names mean something not only to us but also to our friends and family. In this age of instant access to the world...our names can also be misused. Let's make certain we don't misuse the Name of Jesus.

*Holy Name Day* is about the real reason for the Name of Jesus...what his name means for us...and most importantly...what we do with it.

JESUS...means...GOD SAVES! Let's do what Saint Paul asks us to do...go tell others.

