

CIRCUMCISION / I CHRISTMAS 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

PHILIPPIANS 2.9 LUKE 2.15

✠

...AND SO, IN HONOR OF THE NAME OF JESUS, ALL BEINGS IN HEAVEN, ON EARTH, AND IN THE WORLD BELOW, WILL FALL ON THEIR KNEES, AND OPENLY PROCLAIM THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.

We're still in the Christmas Season and this coming Tuesday, January 1, is the Circumcision of Christ and the Octave Day of Christmas. The Circumcision and Christmas Day are inextricably connected.

More recently, January 1 has been called the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, or Holy Name Day. 14th Century (1388-1444) Italian priest and Franciscan missionary Bernardino of Siena, placed great emphasis on the Name of Jesus, linking it to the *IHS* monogram seen in churches and on vestments. *IHS* is understood to mean...*Jesus Saves Mankind*.

In today's Gospel...the Holy Family are visited by shepherds who heard the Good News about the birth of Jesus from Angels...remember the hymn we sang Christmas Eve...*Angels we have heard on high*.

After the shepherds left...Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised. Mary and Joseph were good observant Jews...they did what Genesis and Leviticus instructed them to do...eight days after the birth of a male child...the parents were to take him to the Temple to be circumcised. And they called his name...*JESUS*.

Saint Paul tells us Jesus always had God's nature...but in order to save mankind...he became a human male...and through his great act of humility and obedience that led to the cross...God gave him a name greater than any other name...*JESUS...GOD SAVES!*

We acknowledge our belief in the *INCARNATION*...when we genuflect during the Nicene Creed at the words...*HE WAS INCARNATE BY THE HOLY GHOST OF THE VIRGIN MARY*...and during the Last Gospel at the words...*AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US*.

What does the Names of Jesus tell us about him? Knowing a person's name and knowing what he does means we have a certain "ownership" of that person. Because we know a person's name and know what he does, we "own" a part of his life. It's an ownership of shared experiences and love.

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. We "own" the Name of Jesus because we experience who he is and what he does for us in our lives.

Having the Name of Jesus imprinted in our hearts and minds and souls means we should always strive to act in a way that is pleasing to God and does not hurt others. Jesus shows us how much he was willing to give up by becoming a human being and living and walking and working among us. It is the ultimate act of humility...God revealing his plan for our salvation through Jesus.

In the Epistle...Saint Paul tells us to..."*keep on working with fear and trembling to complete our salvation, because God is always at work in us to make us willing and able to obey his purpose*." What Paul is telling us 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 carry through with our commitment. Jesus knew what God's purpose was for him...he carried through with his commitment...to God and to us...and he is the One we want to pattern our lives after.

We continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus and following Saint Paul's teaching...we should always be ready and willing to tell the Christmas story...over and over again...

...AND OPENLY PROCLAIM THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.

✠