

CIRCUMCISION / CHRISTMAS I 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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PHIL. 2.9 ST. ST. LUKE 2.15



What's in a name? Quite a bit, actually! We know each other by our names. That means we actually know something about each other. Even if we only know a person by the nametag they wear at our favorite grocery store...it changes our relationship with that person. Our "hellos" and "good-byes" become more personal.

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 spiritually every day of our lives.

We call ourselves Christians and we became a member of the Church...the Body of Christ...at our baptisms. We also received our names when we were baptized and that gives us a certain "ownership" over each other..."ownership" in the sense of taking responsibility for our actions inside and outside the Church.

When we act in a way that's best for others, we are putting into practice the Great Commandment to love God and love others. When we love others, we are giving Praise and Glory and Thanks to God who gave us his Son, Jesus, on Christmas Day.

While we're still in the Octave of Christmas Day and the Christmas Season continues for another week...we're diverting from the lessons appointed for the Sunday after Christmas to talk about the Circumcision of Jesus, which we celebrate on January 1st. Today the feast is more commonly called *HOLY NAME DAY*.

When Jesus was eight days old, Mary and Joseph brought him to the Temple to be circumcised. It was at this time they named him JESUS. Joseph had a dream in which an angel came to visit him and told him first to take Mary to be his wife...and...when the child she was carrying was born they were to call him JESUS. Today's Gospel tells us Joseph did exactly as he was instructed...he named his son, JESUS.

His name tells us...WHO he is and WHAT he does. The name JESUS is the Greek form of JOSHUA...literally JEHOVAH (GOD) SAVES. We know who Jesus is...GOD...and we know what he does for us...he SAVES us. And because we know Jesus by his name...we have "ownership" of his name...and that "ownership" lives in our hearts.

Saint Paul writes in his Letter to the Philippians what it means for us to have "ownership" of Jesus' Name in our hearts...

...“For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. 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 all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Having the Name of Jesus imprinted in our hearts and minds means we always want to act in a way that is pleasing to God. Saint Paul also writes we should...

...“work our own salvation out in fear and trembling”.

What Paul is really saying is that part of our responsibility as mature 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 proceed. If we're looking for an example of how to follow God's instructions...we don't need to look any further than Joseph.

God reveals himself to us through Jesus as the caring loving Abba...Papa...who wants what's best for us. What he wants most is to provide a way out of the confusion, strife and despair that we often encounter in our lives.

What's in the Name of JESUS? It's the Name above every other name...GOD SAVES (US)...on that first Christmas Day...and now! And it's the Name of Jesus we should openly proclaim to everyone who will listen.

