

**CHRISTMAS I 2007**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**  
**MATTHEW 2.19 LUKE 2.15**



**NAME HIM JESUS...SAID THE ANGEL TO JOSEPH...AND HE DID...!**

Our Lord's identity is so familiar the important meaning of his name, Jesus, is rarely considered.

Why is it so important...? Because it tells us what he does...essentially...JESUS SAVES...

Startled...? Most people are. For it is commonly regarded as a slogan reserved for bumper stickers, fence posts and simplistic religious campaigns. Relax...it's the truth and core theology of orthodox Christianity.

His name, JESUS, is critically important...not one chosen at random from the Big Book of Hebrew Boy Names...in fact it's really not a Hebrew name...but the Greek translation of the Hebrew name JOSHUA...which translates 'Jehovah (God) is salvation.'

There...you have spellbinding material for tomorrow's New Year's Eve Party...!

New Year's Day is The Feast of the Circumcision. Both today and that day focus on the dedication of St Joseph, the man who played an enormously important role as the adoptive father of Jesus...Joseph the carpenter from Nazareth...husband of Mary...

About Joseph we know nothing more after Jesus is just a few years old. A special fact for us is that this very building, in its original setting as Mission San Jose, was dedicated to him and known as Old St Joseph's Church. Note the remarkable statue of him at the entrance...a treasured gift from a parishioner many years ago.

Today's Gospel focuses on Joseph in the obedient, brave role he played...in giving the Son of God, born of BVM, his name...Joseph precisely followed God's instructions...

In more recent practice tomorrow, January 1, is also identified as Holy Name Day...for it was on the eighth day after birth that male Jewish children were given their name. Joseph was charged with carrying out that duty...AND NAMED HIM JESUS (Mt 1.25)

The Church did not broadly commence observation of naming Jesus until well into the 9c as the secular New Year was a substantially pagan festival and Christianity steered clear of getting caught up in the frenzy...it's not clear that we have yet been successful! The frenzy continues and many seem to have got it backwards with a belief that Christmas is over as opposed to recognition of THE NEW BEGINNING ...Christmas continues for SEVEN days

Taking down of Christmas trees on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the disappearance of Christmas music suggests we still have plenty of educational opportunity in the increasingly secularized society.

The Gospel tells the whole story...And Joseph (following instructions) named him Jesus"...now you know why.

The naming of JESUS is part of the systematic revelation of God's plan to provide an alternative for the strife and despair.

God calls US during this Christmas Season to come to terms with who Jesus is, the meaning of his name and to follow the command of the Angels to the shepherds...DON'T BE AFRAID...GO AND TELL OTHERS.!

Think about His name...JESUS, the optimism he brings...who will YOU tell...?.

