

CIRCUMCISION/CHRISTMAS II 2010

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...THAT MUST CHANGE...

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 it's the 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 your next dinner table discussion!

New Year's Day was 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.

Christmas II and Circumcision Gospels focus on Joseph in the obedient, brave role he played...in giving the Son of God, born of BVM, his name...and later resettling the Holy Family in Nazareth. Joseph precisely followed God's instructions...

In more recent practice last Friday, January 1, is also identified 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 believing Christmas is concluded as opposed to recognition of THE NEW BEGINNING ...Christmas continues for TWO MORE DAYS...until Epiphany...this Wednesday.

Removal of Christmas Trees on the 26th and sudden disappearance of Christmas music suggests persistent educational opportunity in our increasingly secularized society.

The Circumcision 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 to 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 instructions. Role models are readily provided...

BVM...Mary, shocked as she was, carried out God's instructions...that's what mothers do.

Joseph...clearly shocked by his bewildering, life-changing involvement, followed God's instructions...that's what fathers do.

The Shepherds...terrified and bewildered by what they observed, followed God's instructions delivered by the Angels...DON'T BE AFRAID...GO AND TELL OTHERS.!

Think about His name...JESUS, the optimism he brings...think about Mary, Think about Joseph, think about the Shepherds...what commitments do we have to follow their examples...

What will we do...what will we do about all we have heard and seen...WHO WILL WE TELL...?.

