

December 31, 2012  
Eve of the Name of Jesus  
Text: Luke 2:21  
Theme: "A Man by Any Other Name is Just a Man"

**"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)**

**Tonight the world celebrates the coming of a new year. For many it is a night of partying, dancing and revelry, but we of the Holy Catholic Church are gathered together doing the same old thing we always do – celebrating the naming of Jesus. Like all good Hebrew boys, Jesus was taken to the temple eight days after his birth for circumcision and naming. Unlike modern baby boys the discussion of what his name should be did not center around family names or what would sound nice.**

**Joseph and Mary already knew what the name would be. Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. From his eighth day on this earth, his name proclaimed his mission.**

**The angel had come to Joseph. God had chosen his son's name. Now some Hebrew names reflected family lineage and some Hebrew names reflected the hopes of the family for that child. For instance, Jesus could have been named "David" for the great king of Israel**

**who was his great-grandfather. Or Jesus could have been named “Carpenter” if that was the trade the family intended for him.**

**As it turns out, Jesus’ name was a little of both. Jesus is a combination of Yahweh – the proper name of God and Sosa – the verb for salvation. Yahwehsosa, Jesus, Yahweh Saves. So his name is not only a statement of who his father is and his mission but a confession of faith.**

**This is all well and good, and it is even mildly interesting how Jesus got his name, but what does it have to do with us as we teeter on the brink of a new year? When I was in High School, I knew a kid by the name of Sam Hunt. Now that name probably doesn’t mean much to you, but I was duly impressed. Sam’s father was a judge on the state supreme court. Sam’s mother was a county judge. Sam’s uncle had been governor. Sam’s grandfather owned most of Jefferson County, at least those parts that were not already owned by his offspring. Sam lived in a 12-bedroom mansion in Mountain Brook and was delivered to a private school each day by Rolls Royce limousine. Most of us kids who knew Sam longed to be related to the Hunts. Imagine being that wealthy and affluent.**

**But alas, short of Judge Hunt adopting all of us, there was no way for us to “become” a Hunt – not even by marriage since Sam**

**was an only child. So we mourned from afar, watching the Rolls drive off in into the sunset.**

**We may well look at Jesus in much the same way we looked at Sam. Jesus is the son of the most powerful being in the universe. He can have anything he wants immediately because he can create by speaking. He is holy, righteous, omnipotent, omnipresent – able to walk through walls, travel outside the limitations of space and time and of course, immortality is an added bonus. Who wouldn't want to be part of his family? Alas, Jesus too is an only child and sorry ladies, he is above the need for marriage. So, the only hope we have is that his father might adopt us. And that is what he did.**

**Jesus was named and we were given his name at Baptism. Just as surely as if we had gone to court and had our names changed, our names were changed at our Baptism. Jones or Smith or Jackson or Rockefeller for that matter no longer makes any difference. Now we are all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God has reached into the world and, through Jesus, he has connected us to himself. Now we receive all the rights and privileges given to the children of God.**

**However, that family name comes with some fairly significant expectations as well. I remember turning 16 and having all of the**

**anxiety that comes with driving my parent's car. What if I wreck it? What if I get a ticket? And I remember talking to Sam. I brought up the notion of how easy it must be with a family like that. Speeding ticket? Who cares? Both parents are judges and my uncle's the governor! Wrecked car? So what, I can buy a new one with the interest off of my mutual fund. But, of course, what I didn't understand yet, was that the expectations were even greater on Sam. The son of a Supreme Court Justice getting a ticket? The governor's nephew wrapping a car around a tree?**

**Likewise for us, because of our name – because of the family we represent, the expectations on us are incredible. But, this is a good balance for us to have as we enter the new year. We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and children of God. On the one hand, expectations are tremendous. We are to uphold the Ten Commandments. We are to love God with all our hearts and all our minds and all our soul. We are to love one another as we love ourselves. Pluck the beam from your eye. Turn the other cheek. Be Holy and walk boldly in faith.**

**On the other hand, when we fail – and we know that we will, we are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the children of God. Because we have been adopted by God, we not only receive the**

**expectations of being his child, but the benefits, and the chief benefit is forgiveness which earns for us salvation.**

**Regardless of who we might be related to, no one on this earth can offer us forgiveness and salvation. A man by any name other than Jesus is just a man. He might be a judge or a governor or CEO but he's just a man. Only Jesus saves. It is what he was born to do. Another man might offer you security or pleasure or even salvation from an earthly fear. But it is not worth giving up one's name for anything of this earth. In a hundred years, we will all be dead and 2013 won't seem all too important whether it is a year of feast or a year of famine. Actually, the only thing that will be important is that we carried the name of Jesus and we died in the name of Jesus because a man by any other name – is just a man.**