

## 01 January 2023: Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus—Philippians 2:5-11

Happy New Year. In the Church January 1<sup>st</sup> is the Feast of the Holy Name. From Matthew 1:21: (The angel said to Joseph) ...*you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* As we just heard in Luke: ...*and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.* Here's a bit of trivia to amaze your friends: "Jesus" is the English form of the Latin "Iesus," a transliteration from the Aramaic "Yeshua," which comes from the Hebrew "Joshua." In Hebrew Joshua means 'God saves.'

Why is the Name important? In the Bible a person's name communicated and made real the name's meaning. Some people had name changes: Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul—the person has a new identity, direction, and mission. The ancient Hebrews did not speak God's Name. In Hebrew God's Name is four consonants: Y-H-W-H. When reading Scripture, they would say, 'Elohim,' which means 'Lord.' To speak God's Name was to pronounce divine reality and power for themselves, something mortals clearly ought not do.

To say "Jesus" is truly a mouthful! Whenever we say, "Jesus," we say "God, save me, save us!" We say, "God's salvation is here!" We say, "In Jesus, God has, is and will save all people of faith." In Jesus God saves—not 'someday'; rescue and restoration from sin is now, today, here, in my life however good, bad, or indifferent; however rebellious, willful, or lukewarm; however frustrated or contrary. Jesus, save me from the snares of the Evil One; help me lay aside all that separates me from you.

Jesus saves, and our response is gratitude, wonder, love, and praise. Paul wrote in today's Epistle (2:9-11): *Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the Name that is above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* One small token of reverence is that when "Jesus" is said in the Liturgy some bow their heads: an acknowledgment of our salvation in Jesus, a wordless, bodily prayer of thanksgiving for his salvation for us and for all.

Today is the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. As with Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday—the reality, love, and salvation celebrated is not a one-day thing but continuing, continual Feasts of God's glory and our salvation. Each day live, celebrate, and make your life a thanksgiving for Jesus' Incarnation and birth; his showing forth to the Gentiles; Christ's passion, cross, and death; his resurrection and bodily ascension to God's right hand; the sending of the Holy Spirit; the wonderment of the Holy Trinity, one God. Make every day a Feast of the Holy Name for we are saved in, through and for Jesus—whose Name is above every name.

I end with words from the Revelation to John, giving us a glimpse of the right, good and joyful praise of heaven: *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the seas, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures (before the throne) said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.* (Revelation 5:11-14). O God, help us glorify the Holy Name of Jesus on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.