

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, Sunday 1 January 2017

"He was called Jesus"**Reading 1:** Num 6:22-27**Responsorial Psalm:**

Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Reading 2: Gal 4:4-7**Gospel**

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Lk 2:16-21

Gospel Reading: Lk 2:16-21

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Meditation:

What's the significance of a name? For the Jewish people the giving of a name had great importance. When a name was given it represented what that person should be in the future. An unknown name meant that someone could not be completely known. To not acknowledge someone's name meant both denial of the person, destruction of their personality, and change in their destiny. A person's name expressed the reality of his or her being at its deepest level. A Jewish male child was named at the time of circumcision, eight days after birth. This rite was instituted by God as an outward sign to single out those who belonged to the chosen people (Genesis 17:10-12). It was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his posterity.

Jesus - the eternal Son of God who was born of a woman to become our Savior

In fulfilment of this precept, Mary's newborn child is given the name *Jesus* on the eighth day according to the Jewish custom. Joseph and Mary gave the name *Jesus* because that is the name given by God's messenger before Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb (Luke 1:31, Matthew 1:21). This name signifies Jesus' identity and his mission. The literal Hebrew means *the Lord saves*. Since God alone can forgive sins and free us from death, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son became a man to offer up his life as the atoning sacrifice to *save his people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). The son that Mary bore is both God and man - the "Word who was God" (John 1:1) and who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). That is why Mary is not only called the mother of the *Christ* (the Greek word for *Messiah* in Hebrew) but also the mother of God or *Theotokos* in Greek which literally means "God bearer."

Jesus - the name above every other name

In the birth and naming of this child we see the wondrous design and plan of God in giving us a Savior who would bring us grace (the gift of God's favor), mercy, and freedom from the power of sin and the fear of death. The name *Jesus* signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son who became man for our salvation. Peter the Apostle exclaimed that *there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved* (Acts 2:12). In the name of Jesus demons flee, cripples walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. His name is exalted far above every other name (Philippians 2:9-11).

The name *Jesus* is at the heart of all Christian prayer. It is through and in Jesus that we pray to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have died with one word on their lips, the name of Jesus.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Who is Jesus to you? What is your understanding about him and his given name?
2. Mary the mother of God – what does this mean to you?
3. How important is Mary in your spiritual journey?

"Lord Jesus Christ, I exalt your name above every other name. For in you I have pardon, mercy, grace and victory over sin and death. You humbled yourself for my sake and for the sake of all sinners by sharing in our humanity and by dying on the cross. Help me to always praise your holy name and to live for your greater glory."

OUR PARISH VISION – A PARTICIPATIVE CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.