

CHRISTMAS 2008

Luke 2:1-14

Do not be afraid;
For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy,
that will be for all people.
For today in the city of David
a savior has been born for you,
who is Christ the Lord.

ON BEHALF OF THE STAFF HERE AT ST. MARY

DEB GEASON, RUTH GUNDELSBURGER, MARY REISTERER

MARK FITZTHUM, TIM CLAUBAUGH

DEACONS, BILL, JEFF AND KISHORE

AND FATHER DAVE AND MYSELF

WE OFFER TO YOU OUR BEST WISHES AND OUR PRAYERS

FOR A MOST BLESSED CHRISTMAS.

A CHRISTMAS IN WHICH WE COME TO KNOW MORE FULLY

HOW BLESSED AND HOW GIFTED WE ARE.

DO YOU KNOW THE HISTORY AND THE STORY

OF HOW YOU GOT YOUR NAME?

THREE WEEKS AGO I RECEIVED AN E-MAIL.

IN IT, THE SENDER, A GENEALOGY BUFF,

SAID THAT HE AND I MIGHT BE RELATED.

LONG STORY SHORT, WE ARE RELATED.

AND HE TOLD BE THINGS ABOUT MY FAMILY THAT

I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW – BUT NEVER DID.

LIKE, WHERE IN POLAND DID WE COME FROM?

I CALLED MY SISTER MARCIA KATHRYN AND SAID,

GEE, I JUST FOUND OUT THAT YOU WERE NAMED

AFTER BOTH YOUR GRANDMOTHERS:

MARCYANNA AND KATARINA!

IT IS THE FIRST QUESTION THAT THE CHURCH DOES ASK OF YOU!

AT BAPTISM I GREET THE PARENTS WITH

WHAT NAME HAVE YOU GIVEN TO YOUR CHILD?

AS PARENTS YOU PROBABLY HAVE SPENT SOME TIME

DECIDING THE NAMES OF YOUR CHILDREN!

MARY AND JOSEPH HAD IT EASY IN THIS REGARD.

EVEN BEFORE THE CHRIST CHILD WAS BORN

HE HAD MANY NAMES.

HOW ABOUT THIS ONE: EMMANUEL = GOD WITH US

JOHN SAYS IT THIS WAY:

“THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND PITCHED HIS TENT WITH US,

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY,

THERE ARE OTHER NAMES FOR THE MESSIAH.

ISAIAH PROPHESED

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN

AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR

THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

THEN THERE IS THE NAME BY WHICH WE BEST KNOW THE SAVIOR.

MATTHEW RECOUNTS THAT JOSEPH RECEIVED A VISIT

FROM AN ANGEL

WHO GAVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO NAME THE CHILD "JESUS"

IT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF THE HEBREW WORD – SALVATION.

THE ANGEL EXPLAINED THE NAME "JESUS" IN THIS WAY

"FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS"

AND SO ON THIS CHRISTMAS EVE

WE ARE HERE TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF
EMMANUEL, WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR, THE MIGHT GOD,

THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE,

SALVATION, HE WHO SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE

FROM THEIR SINS.

THAT IS A LOT OF WORDS

TO CALL A LITTLE BABY.

SO WE SIMPLY SAY, "JESUS".

CHRISTMAS IS ALSO A CELEBRATION OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.

AND IT IS A GOOD TIME TO REMIND OURSELVES

THAT WE HAVE A SPECIAL NAME TOO.

WHEN WE BECOME FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

WE ADOPT A FAMILY NAME. "**CHRISTIAN**"

THAT NAME IS SOMETHING OF WHICH WE ARE RIGHTLY PROUD.
I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST," WRITES ST. PAUL,

FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION.

WE HAVE NO REASON TO HIDE

OR DISGUISE OUR ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

SUSAN BAKER OF SHELBYVILLE, KENTUCY

TELLS OF FINDING A BEAUTIFUL PUPPY

THAT HAD WANDERED ONTO HER BACK PORCH.

HER HUSBAND WAS ASSIGNED THE TASK OF WRITNG AN AD

FOR THE "LOST AND FOUND" COLUMN IN THE LOCAL PAPER.

HE FIRST WROTE:

GOLDEN LAB, MALE, APPROXIMATELY NINE MONTHS OLD;

NO COLLAR, VERY FRIENDLY,

FOUND ON ROCKBRIDGE ROAD."

BUT SUSAN WAS WORRIED THAT THE EXCESSIVE DETAIL

MIGHT ENCOURAGE JUST ANYBODY TO CLAIM THE DOG.

SHE ASKED HER HUSBAND TO ABBREVIATE THE AD.

WITH EACH REWRITING SHE SUGGESTED THAT THE CLUES

STILL PROVIDED TOO MUCH INFORMATION.

SHE SENT HIM BACK TO TRY AGAIN.

FRUSTRATED, HE CONTINUED TO TRIM THE WORDING

FOR THE "LOST AND FOUND" AD.

AT LAST, HE SUBMITTED THIS AD.

IT WAS ACTUALLY PRINTED IN THE PAPER JUST LIKE THIS:

“GUESS WHAT I FOUND”

IN A SIMILAR WAY WE CAN ABBREVIATE THE PROUD HERITAGE

OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

TO THE POINT THAT OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

ARE LEFT TO GUESS OUR NAME

TO GUESS WHETHER OR NOT

WE ARE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

WE HAVE A TESTIMONY THAT SHOULD BE WRITTEN FULL IN OUR LIVES

BY OUR NAMES,

IN BOLD PRINT

AND IN GREAT DETAIL.

MAY IT READ LIKE THIS.

LET **MY** NAME BE IDENTIFIED AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST,

I REMEMBER **MY** BAPTISM

AND I AM PROUD OF **MY** BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION

OF CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.

I AM PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF CHRIST’S CHURCH.

BUT TOO OFTEN WE TRIM AND ABBREVIATE OUR TESTIMONY,

SCISSORING AWAY THE VITAL DETAILS,

REDUCING OUR TESTIMONY TO INITIALS OR NICKNAMES.

AS A RESULT, OUR CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS A TIMID

“GUESS WHO I AM”?

THIS CHRISTMAS (EVE)

AS WE CONTEMPLATE THE NAMES GIVEN TO OUR LORD,

WE ARE INVITED TO ACCEPT GOD’S GIFT OF HIS SON

BORN OF HUMAN FLESH, “GOD WITH US”.

EMMANUEL – WHO HAS COME TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE.

AND WE ARE INVITED TO ACCEPT OUR NAME –

CHRISTIAN –

A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST.

FOR MANY OF YOU, YOUR COMING HERE TO CELEBRATE

AND TO GIVE THANKS IS A WONDERFUL BEGINNING.

IT IS A GREAT START IN COMING BACK TO CHURCH!

TONITE (TODAY) I ASK YOU TO MAKE THE COMMITMENT

TO CONTINUE TO COME TO CHURCH.

OH, NOT FOREVER,

JUST ONE SUNDAY AT A TIME!

AND BRING YOUR FAMILY!

WE MISS YOU!

AND SO DOES GOD.

