



# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

## NEW YEAR'S DAY January 1, 2019

### **“The Story behind the Most Holy Name of Jesus, and Reflection**

Although Saint Paul might claim credit for promoting devotion to the Holy Name because Paul wrote in Philippians that God the Father gave Christ Jesus “that name that is above every name” (see 2:9), this devotion became popular because of 12th-century Cistercian monks and nuns but especially through the preaching of Saint Bernardino of Siena, a 15th-century Franciscan, that’s the 1400’s, and then a preacher under the Dominican name, following the vision and prophecy of Dominic that Bernardine was his successor in effective preaching.

The devotion to the Holy Name grew from there, partly because of Franciscan and Dominican preachers who followed suit.

The devotion further spread more when in 1530, Pope Clement V approved an Office of the Holy Name for the Franciscans.

The devotion spread even more widely after St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of “the order of Jesus” and what would eventually be known as “the Jesuits” began promoting it in the 16th century. Just 4 years after Pope Clements approval of the office of the holy name, Ignatius and 6 others gathered to follow the rule he had written and take vows. They called themselves the *Compañía de Jesús*, You can tell a Jesuit by their order acronym in the English, S.J. for Society of Jesus. In fact Ignatius introduced a new emblem for his order seven years later in 1541, borrowing from a device that Bernardino had crafted, a wooden placard with the letters IHS, or the name of Jesus. Ignatius took that monogram, and then the H by a cross, and underneath added [three nails](#). [You can see that in the handout] More about that in a minute.

Finally, in 1721, Pope Innocent XIII extended this feast to the entire Church, and then into Anglican commemoration under that Name in this past Prayer Book, where it has always otherwise been known as the Feast of the Circumcision.

The Franciscans of course would and did complain about Ignatius and his companions creating an order under the name of Jesus. Their point was that Jesus died and rose for the sake of all people. No one can trademark or copyright Jesus’ name. Jesus is the Son of God and son of Mary. Everything that exists was created in and through the Son of God (see Colossians 1:15-20). Apparently Pope Innocent

XIII's declaration extending this feast of the Holy Name of Jesus to the entire Church was the end of the debate.

Rather contentious of those peaceable Franciscans, but still, the point is well taken. Jesus reminds us that because we are all related to him we are, therefore, all related to one another, and thus in favor together with God the Father.

There's an old joke about this argument; so much of humor comes from real life situations, doesn't it? Let me give you the short version:

The Dominican father superior and the Franciscan prior general decided to write a letter to God asking him which of the two orders he loved best, and signed by their names and society designations, O.P. for order of preachers, the Dominicans, and OFM for Order of Friars Minor, the Franciscans.

God sends a letter back, ending with "I love you both the same." God, S.J.

But, besides usual in house arguments, here is the important thing for today:

there is power in the Name of Jesus, because names identify us, and the perfect name reveals the perfect nature of the person bearing it.

Both Bernardino and Ignatius understood this, as have so many others in their ministries throughout the Day of Jesus.

When the temple soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden, Jesus stepped forward and asked them, "Whom are you seeking?" <sup>5</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. Jesus' response, making direct allusion to the very name of God revealed by God to Moses, which was "I am who I am," answered by saying, "I AM he." And when Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

This is the Name of Jesus proclaimed, as the Name of God himself.

What power there is even in the Name; the Name of Jesus uttered caused the soldiers to be forced back physically and fall to the ground. This is not a "fall down" in worship. It is a knock down by the presence of God Himself.

Bernardino in his preaching in market places would hold up a placard made of wood and painted with golden sun rays, reflecting this very power and radiance. In the middle, the beginning letters of the name of Jesus latinized from the Greek, what we would identify as IHS, or short for IHSOUS. We use that Christogram all over our vestments and paraments, and windows and carvings and paintings. It is the name, Jesus.

When he held up this placard to be seen by all while he was preaching, people in his audience would fall over, or fall down. This has been documented. Ignatius, following not THAT long after Bernardino, and surely already having heard of the very popular and powerful preacher, wanted that same power in proclamation and mission, and so made use of the same imagery from the IHS placard for his own societal logo.

It should not be an unfamiliar phenomenon to us, having read the holy scriptures, and from our formation in Christian history and mission.

There is power for healing, there is power for salvation, there is power in discipleship, there is power in mission, there is power ... just God-laden power in his name.

Jesus is brought to the temple for the proscribed circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of his birth. Mary and Joseph will proclaim the name given to this baby by revelation, being Jesus, or Y'shua, savior. It was a fairly popular name proclaiming the deep desire to see God's salvation. But the same phenomenon did not carry over to other babies or adults. In this case, the Name was in fact the Action of God in perfection. Its like saying, What is your name? And the Answer is by any other name, God.

Our celebration today begins from the proclamation that this child, now born, is named – in faith by mary and joseph – Jesus, with full understanding that this name is exactly who this child is and would be.

How about us? Well, we are always searching for our own identity, aren't we? And we hope that our parents gave us a name that reflects Gods very purpose in our lives. That doesn't always work out.

I remember before I was ordained in my home parish of the day in Springfield, Oregon, a man who came to church out of nowhere. We had to get used to the fact that he had changed his name legally to "Human Race." It was difficult. So, besides trying to make a statement to the world, or even just legally changing our name to feel like it suits us better, or trying to living a life of introspection attempting to justify one name or another, there is another way for us as Christians to live in and live under a perfect, and world changing name.

In the reading for this day for Morning Prayer, we read of Jesus telling his disciples that they would no longer simply be asking to use His name doing ministry, because he was leaving, and would be going to the Father, from whence he had come. This made perfect sense to them. And then he said, so, you will minister by asking God the Father, and doing so in my Name.

It doesn't matter who are what or where, as long as you are coming into the presence of God the Father, under and by the name of Jesus, and expressing and making use

of His power by his name for his purposes. The humility of the servant, proclaiming the name of the master, is your name, too.



Saint Bernardino's rays and name of Jesus placard, painted on wood with gold rays. Saint Ignatius added the cross and the three nails for his S.J. logo.

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