

“Happy New Year.” Ah but has anyone given any thought as to how new this coming year is? And where would we get anything new from it? In what way does the present day differ from yesterday, or from the first day of the past year? And in the future, will there not be same interchange of days and nights, the same turn of months and seasons as there was before? Will the course of events not be new?

Wisdom also rejects this, saying, *What is that which has been? the very thing which shall be: and what is that which has been done? the very thing which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Who is he that shall speak and say, Behold, this is new? it has already been in the ages that have passed before us* (Eccl. 1:9–10).

So, does this mean our New Year greetings are pointless?! Surely not! Such a custom sanctified by antiquity must have meaning—and deep meaning at that! No matter how much we doubt the sincerity of these good wishes, we nonetheless cannot reproach them as unnecessary or pointless. There should be something truly new for the soul to believe in, regardless of the agedness of everything around us, something for which it assuredly searches and yearns; and it is ready to embrace it in everything that seems new. What could this thing be?

Perhaps the secret lies another festival we celebrate at this time of the year (normally 2nd January- The Feast of The Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In ancient Jewish tradition, a child was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life. This ritual was—and is—considered a sign of the covenant between God and his people, dating back to the time of the patriarch Abraham, about 1800 years before Christ—as documented in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis.

And vestiges of this naming ritual were retained in Christendom. In our historical baptismal liturgy, the priest would ask the parents and godparents to “name this child” before the water bath. It may seem odd to us, but—at least as far as religious institutions were concerned—children had no name at all before this official ritual naming. Our names give us identity before God, and individually before others.

Somebody has said there are three hundred sixty-five different names in the Bible given to our Saviour and Lord. I’ll take his word for it! But in one

single verse in the Old Testament we read, "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" Call him Lord. Call him our Shepherd, calling him our Saviour, calling Him our Messiah, the Christ of God, calling him our Mediator, our great High Priest, our Intercessor. But out of all of the names by which he is named, the most beautiful is the name Immanuel. "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is God is with us."

That name is as meaningful and as significant as it is gloriously, incomparably beautiful. Over the span of history God has revealed himself in flashing lights, thunder and lightning, tempests, wind and fame but no-one ever saw his face!

But nothing comparable to the glorious combination of heaven and earth when Christ came to live among men; forever the gulf between heaven and earth is bridged, and forever God and man made one. The significance and the meaning of that name Immanuel, God is with us.

Here is a babe nursing at a mother's breast. Here is a boy growing up. Here is a man walking in strength. Here is God's Servant dying on a cross. Every act of His life and every breath that he breathed is the act and the life of Almighty God bringing the blessing of that name, "God is with us."

He shared our toil and our labour. He shared our privations; all of our limitations were known to Him. He was poor, and he was hungry. He knew what it was to be weary and to be exhausted and he entered into the life of all of the sorrows, and trials, and temptations of God's people in the earth.

When death visited a home, it brought tears from His eyes. And when He saw the blind and the halt, and the maimed, and the crippled, He was moved with compassion upon the people. We have in our sorrows, and in our trials, and in our agonies, and in our disappointments, and in our tears, and in our broken hearts, we have a blood brother in Jesus.

And in his ministry, somehow there was about him what made mothers lay their children in his arms that he might bless them; put his hands upon them and pray over them. There was something about him that made the publicans and the sinners love to hear His words. There was something about him that even as he bowed his head in death, a malefactor crucified by his side felt constrained of God to believe he would have a heavenly and an ultimate kingdom.

Come, come, bow, and welcome, "His name shall be called Immanuel, which being interpreted is," God is, God is here, "God is with us":

But then Joseph had to go and call him Jesus!!

Why change the name for goodness sake. Didn't Gabriel get the message across in the first place!?

The name *Jesus*, of course, is the Latin form of the Greek *Iesous* ("yeh-soos"), which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew *Joshua*, meaning roughly "God is salvation."

Jesus, Saviour

He came to change things!

He was named Jesus to provide us with a beacon to follow, a leader to emulate, and a way for us to move ever closer to divine goodness, grace, and mercy.

In this world so afflicted by hostility, in this age so plagued by divisiveness, in this time so overwhelmed by name-calling, the name of Jesus provides an antidote to hatred, a cure for violence, and a balm for pain.

He came into this world to change a rough fisherman into an apostle, Simon Peter. He came into this world to change a blaspheming Pharisee into the mighty apostle Paul. He came into this world to change a cringing monk into Martin Luther, the preacher of God. He came into this world to take a mill hand and make of him a David Livingstone. He came into this world to take a poor cobbler and make of him a William Carey. He came into this world to change the course of so many lives. He came into this world to create a new order and a new humanity.

This is the heavenly ministry of Christ our Lord.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity The Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: "Jesus," "YHWH saves."

The name "Jesus" contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray "Jesus" is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him."

"The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience." This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus."

On the matter of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Saint Bernard (A.D. 1090-1153) expressed:

"The sweet Name of Jesus produces in us holy thoughts, fills the soul with noble sentiments, strengthens virtue, begets good works, and nourishes pure affections. All spiritual food leaves the soul dry, if it contain not that penetrating oil, the Name Jesus. When you take your pen, write the Name Jesus: if you write books, let the Name of Jesus be contained in them, else they will possess no charm or attraction for me; you may speak, or you may reply, but if the Name of Jesus sounds not from your lips, you are without unction and without charm. Jesus is honey in our mouth, light in our eyes, a flame in our heart. This name is the cure for all diseases of the soul. Are you troubled? think but of Jesus, speak but the Name of Jesus, the clouds disperse, and peace descends anew from heaven. Have you fallen into sin? so that you fear death? invoke the Name of Jesus, and you will soon feel

life returning. No obduracy of the soul, no weakness, no coldness of heart can resist this holy Name; there is no heart which will not soften and open in tears at this holy name. Are you surrounded by sorrow and danger? invoke the Name of Jesus, and your fears will vanish."

“The Name of Jesus is the purest, and holiest, the noblest and most indulgent of names, the Name of all blessings and of all virtues:
If the Name of Jesus reaches the depths of our heart, it leaves heavenly virtue there.

Happy New Year Indeed!