

4 Advent A

December 18, 2022

St. Patrick

Theme: What's in a name?

What's in a name?

A few days ago I came across at the Y someone who works here for Explore Bikes. Actually, I didn't recognize Shea—I only would see him working for Explore Bikes—until he came up and began talking with me. In our conversation, interested, I asked Shea how he got that name. He told me his mother found it in a book of boy names. She like it and named her son “Shea.”

I got the name “Valentine” from both my grandfather and my Dad.

When I was a boy I avidly collected baseball cards. I was thrilled when I got the cards of all three of the Alou brothers who played in the major leagues at that time: Felipe, Manny...and Jesus`. Up until then, I had never heard of anyone with *that* name—only Mary's Son. I thought it was so neat that the youngest of the Alou brothers had that name. And I called him “Jesus Alou” until one day I heard on the radio during a baseball game the proper Hispanic pronunciation.

Mary, so the angel told Joseph in a dream, **“Mary will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**

What's in a name? A lot.

“Jesus” is the Greek form for “Jeshua,” the Hebrew name. And it's “Joshua” in English. It's usually interpreted as meaning, “Yahweh (or God) saves.”

The angel gave the sleeping Joseph—*and us!*—a clarification about the name. The angel wanted Joseph to know that this special son about to be born wouldn't save his people in the usual military kind of saving from enemies, like Joshua did. No, this son whose birth we celebrate a week hence will save in a much more radical way: Mary **“will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”**

That, sisters and brothers, should stop us in our Advent tracks! (1) What if that angel had told Joseph to name Mary's child “Harsh Judge” or “Strict Rule-Giver”?

What's in a name? A lot.

Every Advent, during its four weeks, we hear seven times this “Prayer over the Offerings” right before the Eucharistic Prayer: **“O God...since we have no merits to plead our cause, come...to our rescue with...your mercy.”** *Seven* times it uses this prayer during Advent! It must want to get our attention. And, you know, it’s that one line which makes me uneasy. It agitates me: **“We have no merits to plead our cause.”**

God takes a big risk in allowing his Son to become one with us. God takes a bigger risk in ripping up any “checklist” of our merits. Salvation—It’s a gift.

“...since we have no merits to plead our cause.” We don’t have to earn “brownie points” to make our case at judgment time. In fact, we have “*no* merits.” Instead, everything we *are*, everything we *do*—it’s not to plead out record before God. No, it’s done out of gratitude, thanksgiving, for the prodigal, excessive love of our God, given us in Jesus our Savior.

What’s in a name? A lot. Especially if the name is Jesus because, as the angel tells us, **“he will save *us* from our sins.”** That’s Jesus’ Christmas gift to us this season and, you know, it’s tacky to refuse a Christmas gift.

(1) See Dennis Hamm, S.J., “Let the Scriptures Speak” (Fourth Sunday of Advent A—December 18, 2016) @deacon.sil.com.

General Intercessions

December 18, 2022

4th Sunday of Advent

Deacon/Reader: Before reading the first petition, please say, “The response to each petition is, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

You are our Emmanuel: Shepherd your people in love, to humbly accept that you came to forgive us all our sins; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are our Justice: Let your Church’s deeds of justice and charity give you praise, especially in our reverence for the poor, for refugees, and for immigrants; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are the Wonder-Counselor: Give joy to our Jewish sisters and brothers as they begin tonight their celebration of Hanukkah; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are the Giver of all good gifts: Free us from the lure of grasping for more, and empower us to share with those in need, especially during this time of Christmas; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are our Peacemaker: Free us from our resentments; lead us to reach out to those with whom we are at odds, especially those within our own families; and bring an end to the horrific war in Ukraine; we pray to you, O Lord--

You are the Firstborn of the dead: give eternal joy to Mike Garrett, as well as to all who have died from violence in our city and nation; we pray to you, O Lord—

**You are our Healer: Reach out with your healing hand to the sick
and to those prone to depression during these days;
we pray to you, O Lord—**