

# ***FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS***

*1 Samuel 2:18-20,26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52*

In just four short days, Jesus has gone from an infant in a manger to an adolescent, in the Scripture readings assigned to be read today. We are told that when the time of their purification had been completed, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons”.

Mary and Joseph devotedly began their life with Jesus, and His life with them, and with us, with worship and prayer, with obedience and thanksgiving, with sacrifice and joy. In the first part of the life of Jesus among us, Mary and Joseph did four things with and for Jesus, four things that bound them, with him, closer to God, closer to the people of God, and closer to one another.

**The first thing** is that they named Him Jesus as commanded by the Angel Gabriel. They gave him the name “Saviour”, for through him God would save his people. This bound them closer to God, closer to Jesus, and closer to one another.

Sharing a vision draws us into a special relationship, and living by that vision, creates a special community. As we go into the new year, consider how we name one another. Do we call others what God asks us to call them? Do we name as our brother or sister, the person next to us? Do we see in their face the face of Christ?

The first thing Mary and Joseph did, at the beginning of the life

of Jesus, was to name him as God asked them to name him. The naming ceremony was done on the eighth day in accordance with the Covenant God made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, circumcised, and thereby becoming identified as the children of Israel and heirs to the promises made to him, the promise of a people, a land, and a God who cares, a God who would deliver and rescue his people.

**The second thing** Joseph and Mary did was they made Jesus a part of the family of God. They said to God, look He is a child of promise, this baby is meant, with all who call on Your name, to inherit Your kingdom. He is Your servant, He is one of us, the ones you gave Yourself to after the time of Noah, the ones You said to Abraham and to Moses would be a nation of priests and kings to serve You, and bring everlasting glory to Your name amongst all the nations.

Do we make those God has given us a part of the household of God? Do we extend to them the privileges and responsibilities that we have received from the Lord? We are talking about circumcision or baptism here, but about the living faith that claims the power of God's love upon the lives of those in our care, upon the lives of those for whom we are called to care, by the Spirit of the Lord and the words of the prophets.

The second thing Mary and Joseph did with Jesus bound them closer to God, closer to God's people, and closer to one another.

**The third thing** that Mary and Joseph did was, when the time of purification was over, was present Jesus, as their first born, to God at the temple. This is a very special thing to do, a thing that is related to all the commands regarding things that are first, from the first fruits of our gardens, to our first born, belong to God. And God asks that we present them to Him where He abides. And name them His.

By this act, Mary and Joseph recognized that their child was not their child. Rather He was God's child, and that the purposes of his life should be, would be, determined by God, and that as parents entrusted with God's child, they should seek the wisdom and counsel of God each day, so that they might raise Him as God asks.

The first child is special, because it is first. And what is first goes to what is First. Our best, our finest, our hopes and our dreams, belong to God, who is first in our lives. This child is God's and God will accomplish His work in Him and His love will redeem His people. By this action, Mary and Joseph gave Jesus to God and recognized that God would raise Him in God's own way, and in that recognition, they bound themselves to loving Jesus in accordance with the counsel of God, in accordance to the law, and to the vision, that God gave Moses, and gave them. Not a bad way to begin a life.

We too have people, and plans, that belong to God, and need to be given to God. Time will bring sorrows that pierce our hearts, but it will bring, too, the consolation we all seek, consolation for us, and for all the people of God.

**The fourth thing** Mary and Joseph did, they did on the day of Presentation. Mary sacrificed two doves, or pigeons, for her purification. And so Mary and Joseph show themselves as seekers of holiness, and as ones who possess it, for what they do is to God. Mary and Joseph did not simply begin with an anticipation of great and wonderful things to occur, some with the pain that pierces the soul; nor did they begin simply with an awareness of their own poverty and inability that every new parent, and indeed most every person, feels deep in their hearts when facing an unknowable future, and holding in one's heart the desire to love perfectly.

They began in those things with God, and in humble obedience to all that God has promised, all that God has commanded.

They began with God, they named their child as the Angel told them, they made the one in their care a part of the people of the God, joint heirs with them of the promises, they gave Him into God's care, recognizing that He was God's, not simply theirs, and they sought holiness to live in it and by it, they set themselves, as they set Jesus, apart for God.

As we enter the new year, as we raise up a family, take under our care, under our love, those God asks us to care for and love, will we name people as God wants us to name them? Will we make them, will we treat them, as members of God's family, members of our family? Will we let them be God's, and pay attention to God's counsel, as He tells us how to be His stand-ins? Will we seek holiness? Will we allow the lamb of God, sacrificed for us upon the cross, to proclaim that we are clean? There is a time for everything. This is a time to begin with what should always come first.

**AMEN.**