

# Father Dave's Weekly Homily

**01/01/12 ..... Holy Name**

*...he was named Jesus, the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

-- Some people think that the meaning of names is no longer very important in our society. Children are given names for a multitude of reasons, not all of which have to do with their family members.

-- But names can have great power even today. Just let me give you one example: Hussein. This name, naturally Arabic, has traditionally been given to boys in the Middle East. *Hussein* means “good, handsome, beautiful.”

-- But in recent years it has picked up very different meanings. The fact that it was the last name of the former dictator of Iraq gave it a sinister connotation, far from beautiful or good.

-- And when it was discovered that this was the middle name of a candidate for President, there were people using it over and over again almost as a curse word. Of course, it didn't change the election results.

-- In any case, names have always been powerful. The name of Jesus has been held in respect for centuries. Many people still bow their heads at that name out of reverence.

-- The name comes from the Hebrew for “God saves.” It derives from the same root as the name Joshua. And it is a most appropriate name for the Savior of the World, or so we can say now from the other side of the resurrection.

-- Yet it was a bold statement for a humble carpenter named Joseph and his wife Mary to give this name to their firstborn son. It was not a family name. It was a name they received in a strange revelation, and it was a statement of what that child was to be.

-- St. Paul put it well when he said that this child, born of a woman and born under the Law (meaning the Law of Moses), would ransom us and make us adopted sons and daughters of God.

- In other words, because of Jesus, we have a totally new relationship with God. We are not God's slaves, but his children.
- And this was all made possible because of the cooperation of Joseph and, in particular, Mary. Both were open to God's working in new ways through them, ways that they didn't fully understand, but submitted to in faith.
- And because of Mary's supreme cooperation in bearing the son of God, she received a new name: *Theotokos* in Greek, or as we say, the Mother of God.
- She did not merely bear the human body of Jesus in her womb—she bore the very Son of God. That's something that blows our minds, and led her to a spirit of contemplation of God's wonderful works.
- Today, at the beginning of a new year, we take time to ponder God's workings in our world, in our families and in our personal lives. We take time to pray for peace and for blessings upon our troubled world.
- And we call upon Mary, the Mother of God, to help us keep our eyes on God in a world where we can be so easily distracted. She bore the Son of God in her womb.
- May we not miss God's presence in the world around us and, most of all, in the people who will touch our lives this year.