

The Nativity of John the Baptist- June 24, 2007

Isaiah 49:1-6 Acts 13:22-26 Luke 1:57-66, 80

Your name...

Your name... think about it.

Whisper it so you can hear it.

Not all of us may like the names we have.
We didn't get to choose them, somebody else did.

My dad's name is Henry.
He doesn't particularly like the sound of it.
But my dad was named after his uncle
who died as a British machine gunner in World War One.
My dad found himself as an American machine gunner
fighting on the same soil in World War Two.
Talk about feeling like a marked man....

Well, he carried that name through the trenches and snow,
the Battle of the Bulge and even through an English hospital
after he had been shot by a tank.

He was the Henry Hall that survived a world war.
He met a gal and raised a family.
You can bet he's pretty attached to his name.

Our scriptures today tell us how important name is to God.
God addresses his people by the names of their ancestors, Israel and Jacob.
They were called to be the light to the nations.

If you believe these scriptures are the living Word of God,
we come to understand that we as a people are to be his light.

We call ourselves Catholics.
But of course, our family includes Christians from other traditions.
We are also children of Abraham
which includes our Jewish and Muslim siblings.
We are also children of God—sharing a common mother, Eve.
And you can rest assured that our Blessed Mother Mary embraces all of her
children in love whether they recognize their brother Jesus or not.

As wide as is our Father's encompassing love for all his billions of children, it is just as deep to the billionth power for the name you whispered just minutes ago. That love for you was there when he knitted you in your mother's womb, designing you to be unique among the billions.

That uniquely designed being was named and brought forth with a hope and destiny in God's saving plan.

Are you ready to return that kind of love?

But of course, you don't have to go along with God's will. Zachariah thought God's messenger, Gabriel, was full of hooey when he was told his aged wife would bear him a son. Zechariah was made mute because he did not believe.

His consequence may have been more immediate than the consequences that we've experienced when we've said to God, "Nah—I'll do it my way." However, I can say from my past police service that I have seen such choices often ending in tragedy.

But ours is a God of second chances. Zachariah seized his second chance by naming his son John and raising him to be the one that was to prepare the way for his younger cousin, Jesus.

In a few minutes you will pray to your Father, hallowing his name.

You will come to his communion to receive him by name. You will come to share in Christ's divinity as he had come to share in our humanity.

This gets intensely personal, folks!

Then as we leave here as a people to love and serve the Lord, we will be God's light to the nations.

In the end, it's all in a name: Jesus.