

Pastor Bill Mugnolo

St. John/Zion Parish

December 2017 Article: "Special Names"

One of the biggest challenges that a new pastor faces is learning all the names of his parishioners. That challenge, for me, is even bigger because I need to learn names from two new churches and I don't have any recent pictorial directories to aid me in doing this. In just over two months, I've gotten to know many of your names while I'm still learning others. A few times, to my embarrassment, I've gotten some of your names wrong (if only you could see my "inner cringing" whenever I do this!).

The Advent and Christmas seasons that we now enter in December speak to us of the special names that the Savior to be born would bear. First, was His given name of Jesus. This is the English translation of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (from which we also get the name Joshua). It literally means, "He who saves". In Matthew 1:21, Joseph is instructed to give his future stepson this name because, as the angel said, "He will save His people from their sins."

Several verses later, we hear of another name that this child would bear. As the Prophet Isaiah had foretold, this child to be born would be called *Emmanuel*, which means, "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). We are surely reminded of this whenever we sing the great Advent/Christmas Hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Yes, Emmanuel did come to us and is always with us (Matthew 28:20). As it does each year, the Christmas season will come and go. But the Christ of Christmas will continue to be our present that is ever present. He always knows our names as He forgives us, loves us, and leads us (John 10:3, 14, 27). May His Name be the one that we never forget!

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Bill