

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

I John 1:1-3

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

So begins the first letter of John, that which was from the beginning, that which we have heard and seen and touched. John in his letter is reminding us of what is in the prologue to his Gospel, but with an additional piece of information.

That information is the fact that the Word of God shares life with those who know Him. In the case of the disciples and the Apostles, it was a direct and physical relationship. We saw, we heard, we touched.

For them there could be no misunderstanding of the real and physical present of the Son of God. And neither should there be any confusion for us to day. The Son of God was made man.

Today we commemorate the Circumcision of Jesus. An odd thing you might think, even a little embarrassing, and certainly politically incorrect.

Perhaps that is why the modern churches have either eliminated this day in the calendar or changed the title of the day to the Feast of the Holy Family, the Naming of Jesus, or the Feast of the Holy Name.

They have changed the name, but the readings are the same and the facts are there for us to consider. It is in the Gospel of Luke and Luke only that we read of this event in the life of Jesus and His earthly parents.

First, Jesus was circumcised. For this to be accomplished Jesus needed a real human body, no body? No ability to be circumcised. Jesus was a male, again the same reasoning applies.

Why is this fact important to Luke and only to Luke?

Mark does not talk about the early years of Jesus at all. Matthew is writing at a Jewish Community and so the facts of this ritual were well known and of no great surprise to the Jews.

Also the other actions of Jesus, preaching the temple, reading the Prophets and even wandering alone in the wilderness all spoke to them of His manhood.

John's Gospel begins by speaking from the eternal beginning and has very little detail about the early life of Jesus.

Luke is speaking to a gentile audience. (US!) Have you ever been to a *Bris*? Luke's audience would not necessarily understand ritual circumcision nor understand the importance in reference to the Covenant relationship of God's People to Yahweh, God the Father. Luke wants his readers to understand Jesus as being human, being male and being Jewish.

The Holy Family is the next focus of our attention. Mary, Joseph and Jesus following the tenants of the Law of Moses on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Jesus' life name Him as He is circumcised. Thus Jesus entered into the Covenant Relationship between God and His people.

What we learn from this is the faithfulness of Mary and Joseph. Their faithfulness to the Jewish Tradition (The Law of Moses) and their faithfulness to the New Covenant by doing as the Angel directed them and naming their son Jesus.

I will not suggest to you that the Almighty and All Powerful God could not accomplish all that He wished to do with no human assistance, but I will say it would be important to Jesus being raised in a family that was faithful. Jesus as a human being is no different in his needs for human support and companionship than we are.

The church is often identified in the words of the Fathers as our family. We at St. Dunstan's often refer to the church as family and certainly we share with each other the joys and the sorrows of life. Just as Mary is a model for us of discipleship, so is the Holy Family a model for us of what the church should be. We support each other, encourage each other and worship together recognizing our role as children of God our Father.

Finally, there is the whole issue of the Covenant Relationship between God and His Chosen People. We all remember that a Covenant is an agreement between two parties and that one for the parties is much more powerful or has more resources than the other party. The weaker party has everything to gain and the stronger party has little of nothings to gain by the relationship.

So is the relationship between God and the descents of Abraham. God entered into this Covenant and promised to be Abraham's God if he would be his people. Now we see the Covenant is a whole new light as Jesus, the Son of God enters into this Covenant Relationship.

Let me use an example to demonstrate what by God's Grace has happened. You own two pieces of property. One is the house you live in and the other is rental property. You lose your job and money becomes tight. Which mortgage will you be sure to pay and which become less important to you?

The house in which you dwell is the most important. You live in that house; it's the place where your family lives. It is home.

Consider now what it means for Jesus to share the Covenant Relationship with us. God is not only the more powerful member of the relationship, but God surrounds us as He also shares the relationship with us.

When we speak of Jesus sharing every part of a human life except sin; this includes the Covenant relationship of Abraham and his decedents.

Further, in instituting the Sacrament of Holy Baptism He transforms this covenant relationship and extends it to all who would accept this Grace and become part of His family, His Body, the Church.

On this day we remember the gifts of God sharing the Divine Nature with us, for to us a child is born who is the Son of Man and the Son of God.

We remember the faithfulness of the Holy Family and see them as an example to us in our daily life and in the life of the Church.

Finally, we rejoice that the Covenant relationship is now offered to all people and God in sending His Son to share life with us demonstrates His continuing love despite our sinfulness.

Emmanuel, God is with us now and forever. Amen