

(Lovingly
Loved)

Midday Prayers - 18
4.1.68

Bach: Christmas Oratorio n.42

"And at the end of 8 days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." [Lc. 2²¹]

"God -- has bestowed on him that name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..." [Phil. 2¹⁰⁻¹¹]

Jesus — the name given to the child born of Mary at Christmas; a name we honour and reverence in the way we use it and in the custom of bowing our heads when we do so; a name which means something very special, so much so that we English-speakers often find it odd that Spaniards use it as an ordinary name for boys, though it was a common enough name in Jesus' own time. We call it the "Holy Name" — and as such it has been revered right from the early days of the Church, meditated on and written about by many of the great saints and mystics, who, better than we, have recognised its power and beauty, the attraction and personality of the Man whose name it is. So much devotion has it inspired that, besides

commemorating the Octave day of Christmas when Jesus was given that name, the Church now celebrates specially the Holy Name, on 2nd Jan., giving us a whole day to reflect on it.

What's in a name, you may wonder. Well, first of all, for the Hebrews, giving a child a name wasn't the bit - miss, about anything-will-do affair it often seems to be today in the western world. A name has a meaning and a power and influence. Remember how the Apostles worked miracles in the name of Jesus? 'Jesus' means "God saves". But He wasn't just called that — He Himself personified the meaning of His name — He is God-saving-as, the Saviour. His name was specially chosen and given, even before His birth, because that was what He was going to be. It's a bit like men being given names, or giving themselves names, such as Lenin, Stalin: it's more like the change of name given to Abraham, Peter & Paul, who had been Abram, Simon, Saul respectively. The change indicated — a mission given them by God, and specified that mission. So the child at Bethlehem is someone with a mission from God — He's sent to save us, and his name is Saviour. For those who know him & appreciate who He is & what he is, His name Jesus, is sweetness, light, joy, happiness. This is what that beautiful chorale from Bach's Christmas Oratorio with which I began,

is about — a meditation on the name of Jesus: Jesus, lead my
footsteps, guide my senses, keep me from evil, keep me from everything
that's not you: may your grace be always with me & from all
weakness defend me.

Let's reflect a moment now on the name of Jesus, listening
to this old Latin hymn, translated in verse by the poet Gerard
Manly Hopkins

Q. (Pr. for Y.C. p. 51)

John Dale's memo.

PRAYERS.

Saturday is the Feast of Epiphany, commemorating the visit of
the 3 wise men to see Jesus. Let's join them on their journey
to seek Jesus

Annal. (The child in search...)