

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon : The Naming of Christ  
Sunday 1st January 2023

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**THE NAMING OF CHRIST 2023**

Not so long ago there were basically four ways for people to communicate 1  
January 2023 – Christmas 2/The Naming of Christ

In today's Gospel we read these words: "After eight days had passed, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb". Much earlier in Isaiah we read "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine". The baptism service puts it like this: "So it is that God knows each of us by name and we are his". Our name is absolutely crucial and fundamental to our very being. When I was born, I was named after my father – a very common practice in those days. Today parents are more imaginative and often want to give their child a distinguished and memorable name. It is the first question asked when announcing the birth of a child: what is his/her name? It is an important decision.

So, it follows that to greet someone by their name is an important affirmation of who they are. In my previous diocese we had a new Bishop who called everyone 'mate'. He soon stopped when the Dean declared 'not even my plumber calls me 'mate'. It is always so affirming when we are addressed properly by our name. I have long been impressed by head teachers who know their students by name, by a nurse who knows their patients, by shopkeepers who knows their customers. It makes a difference.

So, if I encouraged us all to make one resolution this New Year it is to make a real effort to get to properly know the names of those around us. It will make a huge difference. What else do I want to share this morning? Three brief thoughts:

Firstly, some helpful and encouraging words from our late Queen who said:  
*'I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is*

*to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.'*

Secondly, I warm to John Wesley's Rule of Conduct:

*'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can  
In all the ways you can, in all the places you can,  
At all the times you can, to all the people you can,  
As long as you ever can'.*

Thirdly, some words of wisdom I heard on Christmas Day from a youngster who was given a magic pad of blank black paper, which when you draw or write with a special felt tip pen, creates the most wonderful colours and images. He was so happy with this gift and uttered the immortal lines – 'with this I can do anything'.

God, who knows us by name, gives us on this New Year's Day and on every day that follows a new beginning, a blank piece of paper – on which we can do anything. Amen.