



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Holy Family 2018, 8.30am BCP Holy Communion

A rose by any other name, would smell as sweet.

Shakespeare is rich with Christian theology, but this is not one of his strong points. Names are very important in the tapestry of Christian life and thought.

In today's Gospel we are reminded of the clear instruction of Christ's name. 'and thou shalt call his name JESUS'. And repeated again 'and he called his name JESUS'. (Matt 1.21,25)

At our Baptism you and I were given the name by which we are *truly* known, known to God. As the prophet Isaiah told us centuries ago: 'He has called [us] by Name.' (Isaiah 43.1)

In Judeo-Christian theology names are not simply labels, they have a power beyond themselves. They do not just describe, they reveal in a much deeper way, far beyond what we are accustomed to in our part of the world nowadays. In Judeo-Christian theology a name carries with it in a mysterious but powerful way the presence of the person who's name is invoked. Throughout the Scriptures angels act in the 'name' of God and thereby wield God's power on their mission. This even leads to people confusing angels for God himself on lots of occasions (Gen. 32.22-32).

In Judaism the Divine Name is so powerful and sacred that it may not be spoken.

But what of the name that is given to the Saviour – ‘Jesus’. Yeshua, Joshua, Jesus – it’s all the same. A very common and unexciting name. Colin Steve, Jack – it’s that kind of name.

Perhaps the humility of God is found even in His name. He will die a petty, ordinary criminal’s death, He will grow up in a distinctly unfashionable town. Colin was born in Slough, he was done for petty burglary and given 100 hours community service. But in this ordinary bog-standard name, men will cast out demons, heal the sick and raise the dead – as the Apostles did by invoking the Holy Name of Jesus. This is a name that people will die for and continue to die for today.

Today, in the modern rite we begin each Eucharist ‘In the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ powerfully invoking His might, and acknowledging His presence among us now. Just as the Holy Name of Jesus ‘IHS’ - the Name of Jesus without the vowels - is painted above His altar here.

We are called to dwell in His name. As angels – messengers of God – bearing his saving name into the world. To act in the power of His name, have his name on our lips throughout the day. To invoke the Name of Jesus is to draw nearer to Him. When we pray, to do so in His name. To say thank you throughout the day to Him, to turn to His name when we are in any kind of need. And to speak of others of Him, naturally and without fear of being weird – but as it is, the most natural thing in the world. To enthrone Jesus on our lips, and in our hearts and lives, that He may be enthroned in all the world – and all creatures live to praise His name.