

“The Lord bless you and keep you “ (Num 6:22-27; Luk 2:21)

- * Speaking of this Sunday, we identify it as the first day of the week and the first day of the year simultaneously. What can this coincidence mean? For those who are not interested, it can mean almost nothing, but the mindful thinkers can find a meaning at this juncture for their mental and spiritual longing. For them, it can mean the newborn of something, or the first of something, or freshness of something, or they may have all of these together. But despite the difference of opinion, everybody who cares and those who doesn't should agree, that this Sunday distinguishes itself from the other 52 Sundays of the New 2012 Year by virtue of its unbeaten newness, just like the first day of creation.
- * Considering the celebration of the New Year's Eve in the last night to be important to some respect, we decide to comment on it. According to the universal belief, the man's future success relies on how well he is going to ring in the New Year. It is regarded as very important to fire rockets into the sky and make noise with other explosive devices. But the most important detail of people's belief and action is a verbal expression of a single wish on their gathering together: *Happy New Year!* or *We wish you a most blessed 2012!* Such formal sayings are regarded as the blessings of the year. However, such a verbal expression is almost nothing but God's blessing is everything. Then, has God wished us a most blessed year too? It depends. For example, with our gathering on the first day of the new year, we demonstrate our thankfulness to God in Christ Jesus for his countless blessings of the past and for those which we are expecting in the future giving Him all the glory and worship. In His turn, God wishes to bestow upon us His grace so that we may spend the year in a holy manner and for the welfare of our souls. With this purpose in mind, we regard our gathering today as a great opportunity to start the New Year with God's help and assistance.
- * The next great opportunity of our gathering today is the receiving of Aaron's blessing at the end of our worship. In this instance, there is not a man who wishes us a most blessed 2012 than the Lord himself! Many centuries ago, He commanded to the Clergy to pronounce the threefold blessing upon His people on behalf of His name, (Num 6:27). Unlike a man's wish, here we have dealt with the Giver of all goodness, who wants to bless His people with His protection, nourishing, and peace, (vv. 24-26). Have you seen the difference? If you have and respond to God's call, you may enjoy all the benefits of being God's people in Christ Jesus.
- * Now, look at the caption on the reverse side of your bulletin. The print says, *Circumcision and Name of Jesus*. The caption for this Sunday suggests taking *Circumcision and Name of Jesus* as heightened interest because they dealt with the firstborn Mary's Son and with us.
- * At first we'll comment on circumcision. It shouldn't surprise that a circumcision is considered a life-threatening ceremonial action. In fact, some infants and adults passed away as the consequences of their circumcision, or there would be no regulation on this matter. It states that every Jewish male child had to

be circumcised on the eighth day, even it fell on the Sabbath. However there were some exceptions.

Thus, a circumcision was delayed in the cases when the child was weak, or if two of his brothers had died in consequence of the operation. Our gospel reading confirms that Jesus was circumcised at the end of eight days; thus being *born under the law*, he entered into Covenant, (Luke 2:21; Gal 4:4) in order to fulfill the law and all that was said about him by the prophets.

* The Lord passed this painful law of the Old Covenant and kept all other bylaws of Moses perfectly until "the handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross." The prophet Jeremiah foresaw a time when God would make a new covenant that would replace the one He made with Israel at Mount Sinai (31:31).

It is Christ Jesus who brought the New Covenant into being through His obedience to the Law and his sacrificial death on the cross (Heb 9:15). It is through him that was established a new relationship between God the Father and all who will believe in His Son. That is why we are not required to be circumcised, (Act 15:1-21), or to keep a number of the requirements of the Mosaic Law; rather we are to obey Christ as he obeys His Father.

* Reflecting on Aaron's blessings, let's talk next about God's name by which we are blessed at the end of each of our Sunday services. Thus you shall bless my people saying, *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace*, (Num 6:24-26). As we have experienced many times Aaron's blessing, we shouldn't be indifferent on hearing the teaching about God's mysterious name, the name by which *we receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*, (Heb 4:16). Just think of Him who has bestowed upon the children of Israel all the thousands, and thousands of thousands, and tens of thousands of the blessings for thousands years, from the time of Moses up to now, and try to make a conclusion. By the way, none of human is able to make adequate conclusion of God's riches He has rained upon all people because it is beyond our mind to conceive.

* Traditionally, a newborn child added the father's first name after his own given by his parents.

For example, Jesus spoke of Peter as, "Simon Bar-jona" (Mat 16:17), which means, "Simon, son of Jona."

But in the case of naming our Lord, he was named by his heavenly Father through the Angel Gabriel. The Angel said to Joseph that Mary will bear a son, *and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins*. (Mat 1:21). Among Jews he was known by name YAHU'SHUAH that is the same name JESUS in English that

means "the Lord is my salvation." As you can see the name of Jesus conveys a twofold meaning - He is the Lord, and He is One who saves his people from their sins. Amazingly, God became flesh or saying more precisely, He became God-with-human being; that is another name of our Lord. God's words were fulfilled, *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and humans shall call his name Immanuel,"* (Isa 7: 14).

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, “and you shall call his name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,” (Isa 9:6;). By these wonderful names, we have been blessed for the welfare of all who believe.

* Another significance on this matter is that the name of our Lord is not only an appellation, but also a description of his personalities by which he became known to the nations. In his pre-incarnate state, he had conducted Israel to a victorious possession of the Promised Land; he had led the remnant from Babylon. And after his incarnation followed by the glorious victory over death, he has led his people from slavery to sin and death to the Promised Land. He was proclaimed and believed to be - the Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King – Christ, the Lord.

* As we continue thinking over the Lord’s name, we come across the beloved passages that reveal God’s glorious name to us. In that section we hear how the Lord came down in a cloud and stood with Moses and proclaimed his name as follows: *The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished,* (Exo 34:6,7). In addition to what we’ve already said regarding God’ character, this revelation is also helpful in understanding the wonderful name of our Lord.

* So, the Lord’s name is utterly great! It is so glorious that it leaves far behind our linguistic ability to describe its awesomeness. But what we’ve already learned about His incarnation, the work of salvation, death, resurrection, and ascension are well enough to trust in this wonderful name and be blessed with eternal salvation.

* As Jesus glorifies his Father, we are glorified through him as well; and yet, he expects to be glorified by his worshippers. It is good and salutary that by our gathering on the first day of the New Year, we’ve realized the great opportunity of this time – come and worship. In turn, where God’s name honored by worshipers, Jesus Christ comes and blesses them with Aaron’s blessing: *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

Brothers, bless we the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

