

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Long before a child is even born a great deal of consideration goes into deciding what each child's name shall be because names have meaning. Names reflect the hopes and aspirations of parents for the new life about to enter the world. I suppose the names chosen for each child say as much about the parents as they say about the child because in some way the names we give our children express what we sense our family, our community, our world is in need of at any given moment – a hope yet to be born to address the world before us. The truth is, long before or even if a child becomes aware of what the name a child bears means, the choice of the name placed upon that child expresses a hope and a promise for the world.

This morning, only a few moments ago, when five new lives entered into the life of God through the waters of Baptism, we unwittingly considered five such hopes and dreams for the world under the guise of the names Jena JoAnn, Raymond Christopher, Ava Nichole, Cyrus Lee, and Anthony Deshawn. Even though we are most likely completely unaware of their meanings, the names placed upon these five at birth speak volumes

Review of names:

Raymond Christopher: *Raymond* French for the German Regimund means “wise protector;” while **Christopher** literally means “bearer of Christ”. *Raymond, you have a perfect name for an eldest brother for a family and a gift to the world who makes Jesus' name known.*

Ava Nichole: *Ava* is the Latin form of “Eve”, from the Hebrew name *Chavvah* bestowed on the first woman and mother of all meaning “life-giver”; while **Nichole** comes from French puts forward “the people’s victory”. *Ava*, your name says you give life to the world and reminds us all of Jesus’ resurrection, God’s victory for all people.

Cyrus Lee: *Cyrus* is the name of the most famous and gracious Persian emperor who God anoints – chooses – to rescue God’s people from 70 years of imprisonment in Babylon. *Cyrus* also sends God’s people home, provided funds for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and returned the temple elements to the people of Israel. **Lee** means “meadow dweller” in old English but also literally means “sheltered from a storm.” *Cyrus Lee* your name means “a powerful protector of God’s people.”

Anthony Deshawn: The name **Anthony** comes from the Latin “*Anthos*” meaning flower, and recalls to mind two great saints of the church St. Anthony of Egypt a Desert Father from the 4th century and father of monasticism – people who live together to serve Jesus, and St. Anthony of Padua great teacher, preacher, miracle worker of the 13th century and patron saint of lost things and people. **Deshawn**, de – shawn, is a Gaelic form of *John*, and means “God is gracious”. *AJ* your name reminds of the birth of *John the Baptist* – the miraculous gift of a child to a barren parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. *AJ*, you share a name with people who spent their lives telling everyone about Jesus.

Jena JoAnn: **Jena** comes from Arabic and means “little bird”; while **Joann** – a feminine form of *John* – expresses gratitude proclaiming “God is gracious”. *JoAnn* also recalls to mind the miraculous birth of *John the*

Baptist to Mary's barren, elderly cousin, Elizabeth. John's – and hence JoAnn's – birth and life herald the coming of the incarnate God into a broken world.

So, you see, the names you were given at your birth represent the hopes, dreams and destinies far beyond your own. In them there is greatness and gratitude, purpose and potential, tenderness and temperament.

But today in the name of and by the authority of God – the Father , the Son and the Holy Spirit – a new name has been placed upon you – child of God. Your new name doesn't replace the name your parents gave you, but adds to those names promises, purpose and potential you parents could not make or offer or conceive for you.

God who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them – and each one of us in fact – names and claims each one of us in Holy Baptism, and gives each of us *a new birth and a new name – beloved child of God with whom I am well pleased. The Father gives Jesus this same name at His baptism. Beloved child* comes from Psalm 2 and speaks of being anointed royalty, and with whom I am well pleased comes from Isaiah servant songs suggesting a destiny as a servant of all to bring a splinter of hope, life, forgiveness and peace into our broken world.

Like our own parents who love us – no matter how flawed they may be – the Father desires abundant life and peace for each one of us and each one we meet. But while my parents could not guarantee me a future – but

could only offer me opportunity – through our brother Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, the Father promises and procured for us a life free from death’s final power. More than this, God the Holy Spirit promises us fullness of life now as we learn to live together as brothers and sisters, loving, healing, supporting and praying for one another. And Father, Son and Holy Spirit place in hands the power to bring hope and peace in this world by living together as Jesus teaches.

I suppose the names chosen for a child say as much about the parent. In baptism God gives a new birth from above and a name that demonstrates what God knows the world desperately needs: kindness, mercy, justice, peace, forbearance, forgiveness, and hope beyond our sorrows.

No matter what else you may be named, you are named beloved child of God, a member of the Body of Christ, with the promise and potential to live in and live out the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Listen to Jesus’ words for you this morning:

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

AMEN !!!