



RAISING SAINTS

CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS + PARENTS



FEAST OF THE NAMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Friday, January 13 is the eighth day of the Feast of Nativity on which day we celebrate the naming of our Lord Jesus Christ based on Luke 2:21, “And at the end of the eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” The observance of this event in the life of the infant Jesus underscores the importance and sanctity of names as spoken by the Prophet Isaiah (43:1), “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.’”

Our children are given their names at baptism, when they are adopted into the Body of Christ. This very common human experience of receiving a name helps us to understand why the words of the prophet are so comforting and heartwarming, “I have called you by name, you are mine.” Our sense of belonging to God deepens and is given concreteness.

The Church’s recommendation has always been to baptize a newborn as soon as possible. There was a time

that parents did indeed baptize their children as soon as possible after birth, often on the eighth day which facilitated the naming of the child at baptism. Our life circumstances now do not facilitate the maintenance of this tradition.

The choice of names is also an important responsibility of the parents. In the Armenian Orthodox Christian tradition children were named either after a saint, a grandparent or an ancestor, so that they could have a role model to emulate as they grew up. The importance of faithful, God-fearing role models is extremely important in the 21st century when our children are bombarded through social media with all kinds of attractions, heroes and heroines, some of which are not very desirable in the upbringing of children when we want them to adopt values which reflect the Christian faith.

It is the recommendation of our Church to give the child a saint’s name, either the first or middle name, so that they could observe the saint’s feast day as their Name Day.

FOR PARENTS TO REMEMBER:

1

Names have meaning and reflect the uniqueness of the child. Make sure to find out the meaning of your child's name.

2

Parents need to take the time to learn about the life and attributes of the saint after whom their child is named. Your priest may be a resource for this information.

3

Having an icon (surpa-badger) of the saint hanging in the child's room is a good reminder for the child to be inspired.

4

Older children should be encouraged to learn about the biography of the saint and when the saint is commemorated in the Church. The Diocesan calendar marks all the commemorated saints of the Church; there are also some which are among the saints of our Church who are not on the current calendar.

5

Make it a practice to observe your child's Name Day on the day his/her saint is commemorated. The child should be greeted with the traditional greeting, "May you live emulating your saint." In Armenian one would say "Anou-no-vut abris." Likewise, if a child is named after a relative, then make sure to speak about the good attributes of the that person, giving them anecdotes from the person's life. If the person is, deceased share memories of the person.

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