

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH



**January 1, 2017 – Feast of the Holy Name**

On the church's liturgical calendar, New Year's Day, January 1, is also the Feast of the Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also sometimes called the Feast of the Circumcision, since it is observed on the eighth day or "octave" of Jesus' birth, when, in Jewish tradition, infant boys are circumcised and named, in accordance with the Law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3).

"After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21).

The name "Jesus" comes from *Joshua* or *Yehoshuah*, the Hebrew word for "savior" or "deliverer." Devotion to the Holy Name can be traced back to Paul's Letter to the Philippians, which says God highly exalted Jesus "and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:9-11).



*"The Holy Family" by Palma Vecchio, circa 1515,*

According to Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum in "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians" (Church Publishing, 2000), the observance of the Circumcision on the first day of January was originally designated as a fast day in A.D. 567, to counter pagan festivals that occurred at the beginning of each new year. Eventually it evolved into a feast day, celebrating the naming of Jesus and his circumcision; in Jewish tradition circumcisions are often a festive occasions, when family and friends gather to witness the naming of the child.

**Collect for the Holy Name**

Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation: Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen (Book of Common Prayer, p. 213).