



“And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.” (Luke 2:21)

Amid the celebrations of New Year’s Day—with its toasts, resolutions, and festivities—the Catholic Church commemorates a profoundly theological and often overlooked feast: **the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ**. Celebrated on **January 1st**, this mystery not only fulfills the Law of Moses but also marks the **first shedding of Christ’s Blood**, foreshadowing His redemptive sacrifice on Calvary.

In a world where the sacred is increasingly displaced by the secular, recovering the meaning of this feast is an act of spiritual resistance. Why is it so important? What does it teach us today? Let us delve into its biblical origins, historical development, and enduring relevance for 21st-century Catholics.

I. Biblical Origins: Christ’s Obedience to the Law

1. The Command of Circumcision in the Old Covenant

Circumcision was the **sign of the Covenant** between God and Abraham (Genesis 17:10-14). Every Hebrew male was to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth as a mark of belonging to the Chosen People. Those who failed to comply were **cut off from the community** (Exodus 12:48).

2. Jesus, the “Son of the Law,” Submits to It

Though Christ is God, **He humbles Himself** and submits to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. St. Paul expresses this clearly:

“Born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)

This act of obedience carries a twofold meaning:

- **Fulfillment of the Old Covenant:** Jesus does not abolish the Law but perfects it (Matthew 5:17).
- **First Shedding of Blood:** His redeeming Blood begins to flow, prefiguring the sacrifice of the Cross.



3. The Bestowal of the Name “Jesus”

At His circumcision, the Child is officially given the name revealed by the angel: **Jesus (Yeshua)**, which means “**God saves.**” This name is no coincidence—it is His very mission. As St. Peter teaches:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

II. Liturgical History: Why Is It Celebrated on January 1st?

1. The Feast in the Early Church

Since the earliest centuries, the Church commemorated the Lord’s Circumcision. The Church Fathers, such as **St. Augustine** and **St. Leo the Great**, emphasized its importance as proof of Christ’s **true humanity** (countering docetist heresies that denied His physical body).

2. The Octave of Christmas

January 1st falls exactly **eight days after Christ’s Birth (December 25th)**, following the biblical reckoning. In the traditional Roman rite, this feast concludes the **Octave of Christmas**, a prolonged period of celebration.

3. Changes and Rediscoveries

In the post-conciliar calendar, the feast was renamed the “**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God,**” though the readings still reference the circumcision. However, in the **traditional rite**, it remains **the Feast of the Circumcision**, with a strong Christological focus.

III. Theological Meaning: Blood, Covenant, and New



Life

1. The Blood of the New Covenant

Circumcision foreshadows **Baptism** (Colossians 2:11-12), where Christians are “spiritually circumcised” by the Holy Spirit. Just as Christ shed His Blood in circumcision, He would later shed it on the Cross, sealing the **New and Eternal Covenant**.

2. The Humility of God

The Almighty God submits to a painful rite. What a contrast with today’s world, where many reject all sacrifice! Christ teaches us that **obedience and humility are the path to glory**.

3. The True “Circumcision of the Heart”

The Old Testament already spoke of a circumcision **not just of the flesh, but of the heart** (Deuteronomy 10:16). St. Paul echoes this:

“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” (Romans 2:28-29)

This applies to us today: **Have we “circumcised” our hearts, cutting away sin and selfishness?**

IV. Modern Relevance: What Does This Feast Say to Us Today?

1. Against the Secularism of New Year’s Day

While the world celebrates with frivolity, the Church invites us to **begin the year with an act of consecration**, remembering that **“without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins”** (Hebrews 9:22).



2. The Importance of Sacred Names

In an age where God's name (and even Jesus' name) is trivialized, this feast reminds us of the **power of the Holy Name**, which must be invoked with reverence.

3. Obedience as the Path to Holiness

Christ obeyed from infancy. Today, in a culture of **rebellion and subjectivism**, His example calls us to live in **submission to God's Law and Holy Mother Church**.

Conclusion: A Mystery to Ponder at the Dawn of the New Year

The Lord's Circumcision is not a relic of the past but **a radiant beacon for our times**. It reminds us that:

- **Christ is true God and true Man.**
- **Salvation comes through His Blood.**
- **The year must begin under His Holy Name.**

This **January 1st**, beyond toasts and fireworks, let us offer Jesus our circumcised hearts—free from sin and ready to follow Him faithfully.

"Lord Jesus, by shedding Your first Blood in circumcision, You began the path of our redemption. Circumcise our hearts so that, freed from all evil, we may serve You with love and fidelity. Amen."

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- *"The Infancy Narratives" by Pope Benedict XVI*
- *"The Liturgical Year" by Dom Prosper Guéranger*



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- *“Circumcision and Baptism in St. Paul’s Theology”*

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