



The Martins Family (1981)

Insights on Names and Ordinances

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This article is a response to a Facebook post about my curiosity regarding the use, by a few LDS families in Brazil, of the word “presentation” when referring to the ordinance of “naming and blessing children.”

My interest in this subject began as mere academic curiosity. Yesterday I saw in it just another sociological phenomenon. However, soon after waking up this Sunday morning (21 January 2018), as I scoured my “memory banks” to program my activities for the day, other thoughts, more ecclesiastical and doctrinal, came to mind, and the sociologist had to yield the brain to the high priest. The result is this post.

The Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is the highest deliberative and regulatory body in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It’s this council that approves the contents of the Church’s Handbook of Instructions. With very few exceptions, local leaders and members are not authorized to change the official terminology used in instruction manuals.

I see with a certain concern especially those cases involving the introduction of words and religious terms created by men and women of the world, well-intentioned and wise in the eyes of the world, but who have neither the divine priesthood nor the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

Hence my curiosity about the use of the word “presentation” in referring to “blessing”—the ordinance of “naming and blessing children.” At this point I suppose some may already be thinking, “*Oh, Brother Martins ... there you go inventing problems!*” But hang on ...

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church--Joseph Smith, p.417)

I propose that even the names of priesthood ordinances should not be changed, for these ordinances—including their names and procedures—were received by revelation. And these names of the ordinances bring to the mortal mind certain “impressions” concerning the divine purposes for the performance of such rituals. Because of this, we do not call the ordinance of baptism “diving” nor the sacrament “supper” or “snack.”

Returning to the ordinance of naming and blessing children, allow me some additional thoughts, to be “savored” slowly and calmly.

We learn in the House of the Lord that the names we receive from our earthly parents can be reutilized for exceedingly sacred purposes, involving heavenly power and honors

whose eternal extent and consequences cannot be fully conceived or evaluated by the mortal mind.

The blessing of a little child is the precursor of the future ordinances that that child may receive in the holy Temple when he or she becomes a young man or woman over 18 or 19 years old.

Parents use their creativity and at times inspiration to choose names for their children. A birth certificate issued by a government official records the name of a child before the government of the country. The ordinance of naming and blessing a child, officiated by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, combined with a certificate issued by the bishopric or branch presidency (Doctrine & Covenants 128:9), records the name of a child in the kingdom of God on earth. Eventually, through the ordinances of the House of the Lord officiated by the Melchizedek Priesthood, the name of a child (now an adult) is recorded in the "... book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world." (D&C 88:2)

In short, the ordinance we officiate for our little children is far, far more than a mere "presentation," and although the use of that term may be seen as not necessarily wrong, it does not, however, describe the ordinance correctly, neither reveals to the mind the ordinance's true nature in time and in eternity.

P.S.: I almost forgot ... shaking the baby also is not part of the ordinance. And if the baby, cries, shaking him/her will only make the situation worse. Just saying ...

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