Many of us have had experience with adoption. Either we ourselves were adopted or perhaps we adopted a child into our family. My nephew was adopted into our family, arriving from Korea to be the son of my sister-in-law and brother-in-law. The adoption process required a great deal from the parents. First, they wanted this child very badly – enough that they took the initiative to approach an agency about adoption. They filled out tons and tons of forms and underwent several interviews and reference checks. They incurred delays and red tape. Then, finally, the adoption was secure. The parents had their heart’s desire and so did the child – no longer did he have to live as an orphan – no longer would he have to struggle with issues of belonging or identity. The child now was under the protection and unconditional love of his parents and came to share their home, their table, and their name. He shares in all the benefits of that name and will share in their inheritance.

Jesus, through a process that required that He give up the glory of heaven to live among us and ultimately to die for us, secured for us adoption as God’s children. We are under His protection and love and we share with him a home in heaven, a Eucharistic table and His Holy Name, Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is holy, we the adopted children are holy – even if we make a mistake – even if we violate the Ten Commandments – even as we sin.

Because we share that Holy Name, we share in the inheritance of Christ – the eternal life in heaven and the receiving of gifts of the Spirit and blessings here on earth.

In New Testament times, the right of Romans to give their children for adoption was recognized under Roman law. Similar to our own adoption laws,the adopted child was to be given a new name and privileged status by the family that adopted him. Once adopted into the new family, the son was in all legal respects on a level with those born into that family. Children could even be adopted in someone’s will. In fact, Julius Caesar adopted his great-nephew, Octavian, in his will, making him heir to the empire. In fact, adoption was the most common way, other than through force, of ascending to the throne during the Roman empire’s first 200 years. Tiberius, Caliula, Nero, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus all became emperor through adoption. These men all took on a new name – that of Caesar – through adoption.

We also have been adopted by royalty – by the King of Kings – and we are called by His holy name – Christians. We have received privileges as part of that adoption. We have our identity with Christ and we know that nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ. We won’t get everything we might possibly want, but we know that we will lack for nothing that is important for our own welfare. That’s an even better promise than getting all we want because all we want isn’t always good for us.

We have the right to claim all that Jesus has and all that He is. We can invite Jesus fully into our lives and become more and more like him. We receive gifts of the spirit, such as patience and faith that help us to live in the world. We can trust God and approach him confidently and intimately. The word “Abba” which we as adopted children are privileged to use isn’t a formal word that we would use of someone we couldn’t approach. A good translation for Abby is Daddy” or “Papa.”

Before Christ came and adopted us as his heirs, humankind wasn’t considered worthy to come close to God. The ancient Israelites live under the law. God dwelled in the Holy of Holies – in the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle separated from sinful humans by a veil – a screen. The only time humans could come close to God was once a year during Yom Kippur and then only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. Even then, he entered with blood from a sacrifice, to make atonement for the sins of the people. But when Jesus came, His blood atoned for us for all past, present and future sins. God adopted us. We are no longer hired help under the law, but instead we are children. That adoption allows us to be intimate with God – to talk to God ourselves without separation --– to call God “Daddy.”

God undertook the adoption process of becoming flesh, of living among us, of sharing with us the struggles of everyday living, the pain of disease and loss and finally the pain and humiliation of dying for us. God secured this adoption for us because he loves us. God secured this adoption for us because we are his heart’s desire. Because of that adoption, we inherit the blessings of intimacy with God on earth, the opportunity to come regularly to God’s table and the promise of sharing a home with Him in heaven. Because of that adoption, we share an identity with Christ. Through the Holy Name of Jesus, we, too, are made Holy.

Amen