

20 Pentecost 2020

Creator open our hearts to peace and healing between all people. Creator open our hearts to provide and protect for all children of the earth. Creator open our hearts to respect of the earth and all the gifts of the earth. Creator open our hearts to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all. Thank you for the gifts of this day and every day.

Mi ' Kmaq prayer

I admit, for the most part, that I only know about the cities and various cultures in

California by what I have heard or read. I briefly visited San Francisco many years ago.

However, I was never able to find any hippies. Some of you may remember that the hippie movement started in the early 60's." The word hippie came from hipster and was originally used to describe beatniks who moved into New York City's Greenwich Village, San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, and Chicago's Old Town community". (Wikipedia) The movement culminated with Woodstock in 1969.

By the 1970's, Santa Cruz, California, was a very different sort of place. What made it different was a group of people who lived there in great numbers.

They were hippies — or, you might say, has-been hippies. The Summer of Love had long since faded into a psychedelic sunset. San Francisco's infamous Haight-

Ashbury neighborhood had gentrified with wealthier cliental moving in. The "flower children" who'd once inhabited its "crash pads" now held down regular jobs. Many of these has-been hippies had moved out to Santa Cruz, where the rents were cheaper.

This population of former flower children had a certain impact when their children hit the public schools. One of the things the teachers found difficult was the names of the kindergarten students.

Those classes had their share of Michaels and Lisa's and Margaret's, but there was also Sunbeam, Time Warp and Meadow. One teacher thought she'd seen about everything, when it came to names, until the first day of school came round, and she met a boy named Fruit Stand.

The teacher felt sorry for little Fruit Stand, having to go through life with a name like that, but she decided there was nothing else to do but make the best of it. All through that first day of school it was: "Fruit Stand, can you bring me the chalk?" and "Fruit Stand, are you ready for your nap?" But this little boy seemed oddly distant. He participated in all the classroom activities, but he didn't seem very happy.

Finally, at the end of the day, it was time for the children to go to their buses. "Fruit Stand, do you know the name of your bus stop?" the teacher asked.

No answer. That wasn't so strange, the teacher thought, because the boy hadn't said much all day. One of those shy kids.

But no matter. The teacher had a trick up her sleeve. Every child had a name tag and all the parents had been told ahead of time to write the names of their children's bus stops on the reverse side of their name tags. The teacher simply turned over the boy's tag. And there, neatly printed in block letters, was the word "Anthony." Fruit stand was his bus stop.

Names are not just important, they are everything. They're the labels we bear through life, the invitations we offer up to other people so they may know us better. Should somebody forget our name, or somehow misuse it, we may feel hurt. That's probably how little Anthony felt, after spending his entire first day of school as Fruit Stand.

Anthony may have only been 5 years old, but inherently, he knew the importance of his name.

Remembering names is one of the hardest things for me. I can be talking with someone and 2 minutes after telling me their name, I have forgotten it. It is even worse when I am introduced to a group of folks. I am very envious of priests who can name each congregant as they give out communion, even the children. Obviously, this is a little easier with our congregation.

Just think about how important names are. Sure, it is important to know that we live in the city called Adrian and that we teach our children the name of the street we live on if they get lost. If you are a fisherman, it is important to know if you have just caught a Bass, a trout, or a carp.

Even though it bothers us, can we really blame the college professor, that they are not able to remember the names of 100 students in the class?

Forgetting or failing to know someone's name can be a real issue and creates social distance between people. We've all felt the sting of knowing someone we've met before, or even someone we respect and admire, who walks right past us in the hallway without a second look because they don't know our names.

How many times have you gone to the extent of crossing the street to avoid a person because you simply forgot their name? Or you fail to introduce someone to your spouse because their name escapes you and it is embarrassing?

What an amazing difference it makes, when that same professor greets one of their students by name when passing him or her on campus. When the Boss pokes her head into a subordinate's office and tells him by name what a good job he's doing. And when the pastor knows the name of the person they meet in the grocery store. In each of these cases, an important connection is made and the relationship changes.

The opposite scenario can be drastic. History tells us that when people or entire groups of people were being discriminated against or worse, exterminated, it was much easier to refer to them as part of a group or even by a number, rather than by name. Prisoner 3245; **that** Democrat, **that** Republican, **that** Black or Hispanic person. These labels are often dehumanizing on purpose because to call the individual by their name creates a more intimate relationship.

Learning names is a discipline that requires being fully present when meeting another person. Unfortunately, we are often processing a lot of information at the same time or are distracted by things going on around us. Techniques for retaining a person's name include repeating the name when you are introduced, using it in a sentence, spelling it out, and associating the name with something about the person. It's not the technique that matters so much as the purpose. When you know someone's name, and they know yours, you're on the fast track to knowing them and being known by them.

We know that God knows Moses by name. In Exodus 3:4 we read; "When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

And despite being the Almighty God, in vs 13 and 14 we read; “ Moses dared to say to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

14 God said to Moses, “I am who I am.[c] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” This is how important names are in forming their intimate relationship.

As the writer of Exodus put it, God spoke to Moses “face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exodus 33:11).

Pretty cool!

God gives Moses an assurance which is based in the fact that God has found favor in Moses and knows him by name (v. 17). God promises to give Moses something powerful as a reminder of their relationship: “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, “The Lord”” (v. 19). This recalls the initial encounter between Moses and God at the burning bush, where Moses asked for God’s name, only to be told that God should be called, “I am who I am” (3:13-14).

Moses will be given a view of God’s character — the goodness that he intends for Israel as he leads them to the promised land.

God is no longer a nameless, faceless God who is some kind of neutral or indifferent force in the universe. God reveals to Moses that She is at work on behalf of her people, that God’s word can be trusted.

God will continue to go ahead of the Israelites, as He had been doing since the Red Sea crossing. Moses is not allowed to see God's full glory but was only shown

God's back. I think one explanation of this is that the Israelites who would follow God, would only see his back. If God is out front leading, this makes sense.

One of the most powerful truths in all human history is the fact that God knows each of us by name. That is huge. But we also know God's name. Yes, we know her by many names; Yahweh, Creator, ELOHIM [el-oh-heem]: God "Creator, Mighty and Strong" (Genesis 17:7; ...EL SHADDAI; El Elyon. "God Most High" and ABBA. But we also know God in the name of Jesus. Jesus is both God and human and, because of that, we do not have to guess at the goodness of God. We have seen it in person.

Many of you have watched the animated film, Toy Story. The cowboy toy, Woody, has a name written on the bottom of his foot. The name is "Andy" — the name of the boy who owns Woody and loves him. When the astronaut toy, Buzz Lightyear, is dejected at learning that he's not a real spaceman, but only a toy, he's a lost cause until he learns that he has the name "Andy" written on his foot, too. This knowledge empowers Buzz to put his depression behind him, then get up and do what needs to be done.

We have a name written on our hearts, through our baptism. The name is "Jesus." If we learn to trust that name, to rely on it, to allow it to propel us into a living relationship with the One who is Lord of all, we will find our lives immeasurably fuller and richer. What a life-changing relationship that will be.

AMEN