

## **Homily – Pentecost – I Know You By Name**

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**May 24, 1026 – St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church**

Dear Jesus, you call us each by name and know us better than we know ourselves: Help us to trust you and to follow where you lead, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign, this day and always. Amen.

One of the best practices we follow here at St. Barnabas is that each of you receives a hand written name tag as you arrive to church on Sunday morning. And yes, it means we have to have ushers who are bold enough to admit when they don't know someone's name.

In the past twenty-five years I have been part of seven parishes, and I think hand written names tags are wonderful. Premade name tags can be good, but it establishes two classes of people, those who have been regular enough to get a premade name tag, and those who are not. Two classes of people are not what we are about, at least not what we are about when we are at our best.

Now, if you are like me, then you are less likely to talk to someone if you don't know a person's name. Especially, if you are supposed to know their name. Perhaps you have been told a person's name multiple times, but the name just hasn't stuck in your memory. Or again, if you are like me, sometimes your brain has cross referenced a person to an incorrect name, and you have a hesitation before saying a name. For some, reason six years ago, I had incorrectly crossed our bishop-elect's name. I kept wanting to call her "Yvonne" even though I knew quite well her name is "Lucinda." Lucinda, Lucinda, Lucinda her name is Lucinda. Luckily, I don't make that mistake anymore.

So, if you are like me you are more likely to interact with someone if you know their name. At our best, our churches make it easier for us to connect with one another. That is what we want to do, and that is why we use handmade name tags. And we don't have a person make their own name tag. Having an usher ask your name, say your name, and write out a

tag is very, very welcoming. In my opening prayer I said that Jesus calls us each by name. And we often hear that call from Jesus when someone, another person, says our name.

Having a common language and a common culture are two other ways that interaction can be made easier or harder. One year ago, today, when I was on the Camino language was the biggest factor on who I bonded with and who I passed by. I was lucky, for most people spoke English. And, today we have our annual celebration of Pentecost, that event two thousand years ago in history in which the Holy Spirit of God allowed the early followers of Jesus to cross languages and cultures.

A few minutes ago we heard the story of Pentecost. *“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”*

As the early followers of Jesus gathered there was a noise so loud that it could not be ignored. So startled were they that they lost control of themselves. Their sensory systems were flooded with adrenaline so that their minds and bodies processed intensely the sound, energy, and feeling of the coming of the Holy Spirit. She had come as Jesus had promised, and she was a physical experience rather than something cognitive. All of those present were filled with the Holy Spirit. None were excluded.

What does it mean when human beings fluently speak languages they do not know and that native speakers recognize what is being said? I have to say, that is a super power that I would like to have. Just like that day two thousand years ago, I would like to be multi-lingual and multi-cultural, and I wish our church was that way as well.

If you have attended any diocesan events in the last twenty years, then you know that the diocesan worship services are never just in one language.

There is at least English and Spanish, and sometimes there is Tagalog, and even Mandarin. Bishop Lucinda has been persistent in pushing us to be multi-lingual and multi-cultural.

And, the need to be multi-lingual and multi-cultural was something that was frequently talked about seven years ago during the Bishop Search process. Here in the south County of San Luis Obispo, we are still more than sixty percent Caucasian or Anglo, however, in the Silicon Valley Bay Area it is only forty-six percent. We all know that the beauty of California encompasses people of many languages and cultures. Is it any wonder that our Bishop, Lucinda, was the most multi-cultural and multi-lingual of our five candidates. Bishop Lucinda grew up in Perú and speaks fluent Spanish.

Now, the Holy Spirit is calling us as individuals and as a community of God to be welcoming and invitational to those in the community around us. And, following the example of Jesus, we are not just welcoming and invitational to those who are already like us. God's love encompasses all, and our love should as well.

In his book, "Travel as a Political Act," Rick Steves writes, "I'm unapologetically proud to be an American. The happiest day of any trip is the day I come home. ... But other nations have some pretty good ideas too." Steves insists that a world in crisis needs more travel, not less. Travel, to Steves, is not some frivolous luxury — it is an engine for improving humankind, for connecting people and removing their prejudices, for knocking distant cultures together to make unlikely sparks of joy and insight. As the English writer G.K. Chesterton once put it: "The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one's own country as a foreign land."

And, part of that insight is that we do not need to fear those things and people that are from another language and a different culture. They too are the beloved of God. We can embrace the broader beauty and not just the beauty we already know.

Beatrice Bruteau wrote, "If we cannot love our neighbor as ourselves, it is because we do not perceive our neighbor as ourselves." Travel helps us overcome this shortcoming.

When we are unable to see that we are in communion with another, then ultimately, our lack of understanding turns back toward us in violence and distrust of other cultures and fear of diversity.

Our world sorely needs the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We need to see the connections we have. Even if we cannot BE multi-lingual and multi-cultural, we need to support it as a goal. We need to see and embrace the beauty that is not yet our own.

Historically, we have said that the United States, this most Christian of nations, is a melting pot. Over time new immigrants melt into the culture and language of America. They are assimilated, and by a second or third generation are unrecognizable from "normal" Americans, whatever that is.

In the last few decades another metaphor has come alongside the melting pot metaphor. This is the salad bowl. America is like a salad bowl. In a salad each of the component parts complement each other in taste, and smell and color. However, a carrot is still a carrot, and a tomato is still a tomato. In a salad bowl the parts do not melt together, they remain distinct and identifiable. So, if America is like a salad bowl it means that an immigrant may keep and maintain the beauty that they bring with them. It means African Americans don't need to assimilate their own identity and culture. A salad bowl means that we see beauty in keeping diversity rather than eliminating it.

This is the message that I want to share with you today on this day of Pentecost. Our churches are at their best when we know each other by name, for that is often how Jesus call us. We are also at our best when we see and embrace the beauty that is not yet our own. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit the early followers of Jesus were able to overcome differences, and if we let it, the Holy Spirit can help us overcome differences as well. It is all beautiful.