Easter 7B 2021 What’s in a name?

There is a famous line in William Shakespeare’s tragedy Romeo and Juliet that questions the importance of names. Juliet says: “That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.” The lovely smell of a rose does not come from its name. Juliet is questioning her family’s feud with the Montagues based on their names since she is in love with Romeo.

She suggests that names do not hold worth or meaning because they are only labels. The important thing is to look at the qualities of the person rather than the family name and everything that comes with it such as status and class.

What is in a name?

The simple answer to that from our Lord’s prayer is: everything. Everything is found in the name of God. God’s name is not a label but is Life and Love without end. In our Lord’s high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus is leaving his disciples to meet his hour of glory on the cross and what does he leave them? After Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father, what then does he leave them?

The answers to these questions is simple: God’s name. He prays: *Holy Father, keep them in your name …*

This is a strange request. It is so different than a parent’s last request for children before leaving this earth. What is your last prayer for your children? … Instead of asking for health, wealth and fame, Jesus asks that they not lose the name of the Holy Father.

That should make us blush and after the redness disappears should make us want to look deeper into what he meant by this name.

Identity

Jesus begins with His father who gave him his holy name. *Holy Father, keep them in your name,* ***which you have given me****, …* Everything begins with the Father for He has no beginning and no end. When did the Father give his name to his Son?

Remember the beginning of our Lord’s ministry at his baptism in the Jordan. As the freshly baptized Jesus rises from the water the heavens open and the Father proclaimed him beloved Son. As Psalm 2 promised: *You are my Son; today I have begotten you.*

Jesus is identified by his Father. The father points him out as His beloved Son who has come into the world to carry sin unto its final death. Jesus is identified as Son and Saviour of the world by receiving the Father’s name.

Jesus was again declared to be the Son of God after his resurrection from the dead. Romans 1: 4 “*[Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

In the same way, by our baptism and resurrection, God’s name is given to us. The Large Catechism affirms: *God’s name was given to us when we became Christians and were baptized, and so we are called children of God and have the sacraments, through which he incorporates us into himself with the result that everything that is God’s must serve for our use.*

Father, Son and Holy Spirit declare who you are and to whom you belong in your baptism. As Jesus prayed for his disciples to be kept in the Father’s name, He prays that you be kept in the name of the blessed Trinity. To be kept in God’s name is to remain belonging to God. To lose that identity and connection to God is to lose everything. That’s why there is nothing more important than the name given to you in baptism: child of God.

Unity

Moving beyond our identity in God’s name, Jesus teaches that there is unity in God’s name. He asks the Father that his disciples may be one. If the father calls each of his children by his name, then not only are they connected to Him, but also to one another by that same name.

As there is only one baptism into Christ, so there is only one faith, one church, one Lord. To be called by the same father, means that all his children belong to the same family since they have the same Father.

Unity and oneness cannot happen without love. Love unites as sin divides. It is love that binds Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the unity of the Divine essence. It is love that binds husband and wife as one flesh. God’s love binds all his children into one.

As each one of us approach death, sadly, everything is taken away. Much for which we have worked so hard like wealth and status and health fades. When we breathe our last, one thing remains. God’s name

As God remembers each child, in death, they become one with him in love and so are united to each other in the same family.

Eternity

In this way, eternal life is given by God’s name. Eternity is a gift. It cannot be any different. It is not a quality or something earned. God’s children inherit it not as a right or merit, but by grace from being given His name.

In the resurrection of all the dead on the last day, we read from Philippians 2 that the Father gives to His Son a name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The name giving happens in eternity. All time has ceased. As the Father gives His Son this most exalted name, it brings the worship of all people even the unbeliever in that timeless moment. As Jesus is Lord of the living and the dead, there is eternal life found in his name. For those who cut themselves off from him, there can be only death. For those who have been kept in the name of the Holy Father, there is nothing but life and unity in the love of the Holy Trinity.

So you see then what is in God’s name: Everything!