

*HE
CALLS*

My favorite resurrection passage in the Bible is the encounter between the Risen Christ and Mary Magdalen. Not all of it, just the two simple words, just the moment when Jesus speaks her name and she responds. “Mary” - “Rabboni!” (Jn. 20:16). Just hearing her name spoken to her changed everything for Mary Magdalen; it took her from being a grieving wreck to being sent as the apostle to the apostles.

Names have a special importance in Scripture and a new name is given to someone by God or by Jesus is always important, signifying a new mission or a promise from God. So Abran (meaning ‘noble father’) receives the name Abraham (‘father of many’) and his wife Sari (meaning ‘princess’) 1 becomes Sarah 2 (‘mother of nations’) to signify God’s promise of a child after years of infertility. The change of name is accompanied by God’s blessing. So also Jesus gave Simon a new name of Peter to denote his particular mission (‘Simon son of Jonah...you are Peter and on this rock I will build my community’³) Others adopted a new name to signify their mission. Saul, arch-persecutor of the early church, a Roman citizen, took the Latin form of his name, Paul, a name that would show to the Gentiles to whom he went as missionary that he has something in common with them.

Being called by name gives us a status. It means that we are someone. It acknowledges us as an unique individual, no matter whether our name is unusual or shared by many. It signifies that we belong somewhere. Someone, our parents usually, took the trouble to consider how we should be known in this world.

A friend of mine, an Anglican priest, once spoke to me about finding out what your name was before God. What God calls you signifies the role that God has for you, the part that you have to play in the building up of God’s kingdom. My friend’s name is ‘road builder’ and it doesn’t mean that God wants him to work on building new motorways! You may already have an idea of what God’s name is for you but you might find it enlightening to spend some time thinking about it. Think about the things that God has called you to do over your life - to be married or to stay single, to play some part in the life of your parish, to look after your own family or to care for others, to take up a particular profession or to follow a religious vocation. Think about what God might be calling you to do now and it is there that you will find the name by which God calls you.

God calling us by our name also signifies our belonging to God. As we sing in the popular hymn by Bernadette Farrell,

“You have called us by our name, we belong to you.
You have called us by our name and we are yours.”

Or as it is written in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah,
“I have called you by name, you are mine”⁴

So, to return to Mary Magdalen’s encounter with the risen Christ, being called by her name by the one whom she loved was what enabled Mary Magdalen to recognise the Jesus she had known. Being called by name by one who loved her gave her back hope, gave her back belief and empowered her. She had value. She meant something. Someone cared enough about her to use her name.

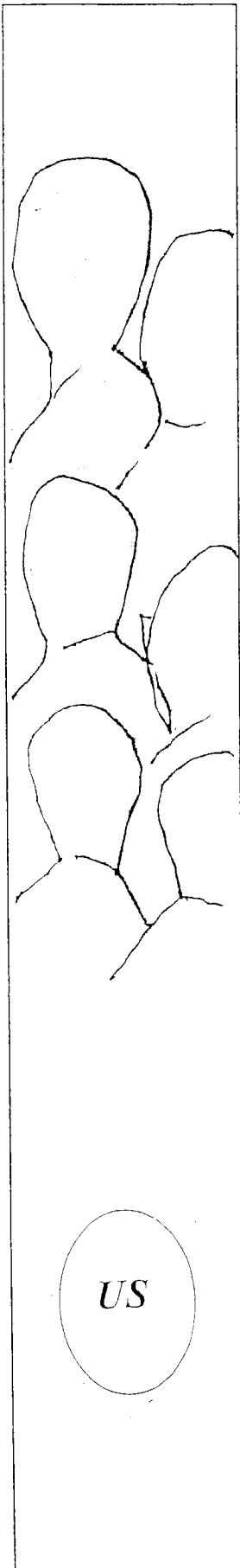
As someone with an uncommon name, I am used to answering to many variations of it - Elizabeth, Elspeth, Lilibet, Liz. People mishear on phone calls - booking a restaurant or an appliance repair, I automatically follow saying my name with spelling it. Sometimes people get my name right but they adopt their own pronunciation of it. I generally tend not to make a great fuss about it but when someone whom I have just met takes the trouble to get my name right there is no doubt that I feel good about it. I feel that that person is really interested in me; they care enough about me to get my name right and to use it.

Use of names matters to our friends in Spred too and is particularly important at two points in the integrated session: when the leader catechist welcomes each person in the silence circle and when the message is given in the celebration room.

In the silence circle, the leader catechist welcomes each member of the community briefly but warmly, taking care to use his or her name. This welcome has a different function from the greetings we exchange when we arrive. The arrival greetings are greetings between individuals who are genuinely delighted to see one another but the greeting in the silence circle is of a different quality. As the leader catechist calls each person by name, he or she is drawing each one into the community. Simply to say, “I am delighted to see you all,” is not enough. The leader catechist takes the time to greet each one individually and by name. This greeting is an acknowledgement that we all belong to our little community of faith. We know that our presence is valued; we know that we are included because someone has bothered to call us by our name. For some of our friends, the leader catechist might need to call their name more than once, either because they are distracted or because they do not hear too well or because they need time to process that their name has been spoken. In patiently speaking the friend’s name until there is some response the leader is following God’s own example. God had to call the young prophet Samuel four times to get the response God wanted.⁵ God went on calling his name and did not give up; neither do we in Spred.

In the celebration room, the giving of the message always involves speaking the person’s name. God knows each of us by name and although it is the leader catechist’s voice that we hear, it is God who is speaking, God who is calling each of us by name. Using the person’s name is not a means of attracting their attention to the message that follows, although it does have that function.

No, using the person’s name says to them that they are known and loved by God. Personally, when giving the message I like to use the person’s name twice if I can. Once at the start and once in the heart of the message, “Peter, Jesus to you today, ‘Peter, I am with you always.’” The first time I am speaking, I am telling Peter what Jesus says to him today. The second time, it is Jesus himself who is speaking the person’s name through me. Each of us is important to Jesus. Jesus knows each of us by name. Jesus loves each of both as individuals and as part of the communities to which we belong.



The other time in the celebration room that we may deliberately use the names of each person in our Spred community is in the liturgical evocation.

Remember, the liturgical evocation found in our Spred books is a model to be adapted to fit the real, shared liturgical experience of the members of the group. So, for example, if the liturgical evocation speaks of the priest coming to visit the group for the celebration of the Eucharist, the leader catechist may expand the liturgical evocation to evoke how each person contributed to the celebration.

“Do you remember when Fr. John came to visit us and we all gathered here in our special room? We all helped to prepare the table. John and Mary put the cloth on the table; Anne and James brought the bread, etc.” It matters not a jot that the liturgical evocation takes a little longer, because each one is helped to remember the specific part they played in the celebration.

Each person is reminded that they are important to the community, that they belong to the community. It does, of course, matter that the leader catechist remember clearly what each person did because in the celebration room, even more than in any other part of the Spred session, speaking truth matters.

It matters also that we take the trouble to learn the names of others who are important to our friends: brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, teacher, key workers. If we simply say, “John’s teacher” or “John’s coach,” John may not be able to identify the role with a particular individual who is important in his life. John is much more likely to recognise the person if their name is used. It is important too, to be aware of the name by which our friends know key figures in their lives. If John knows his Aunt Mary and Auntie May or by a pet name, then we have to know and use that too. Remember that although at a mainstream school, teachers are usually Ms, Mrs. or Mr. Our young friends may know their teachers only by their Christian names.

When the catechist takes the time and takes the trouble to remember and use people’s names in the way that his or her friend uses them, it demonstrates the deep level of attention and care for the friend to which we are called as Spred catechists. Particularly when a friend is non-verbal or has little language, this level of attention helps the friend to be aware that it is his or her story that is being shared, whether in the celebration room or around the agape table.

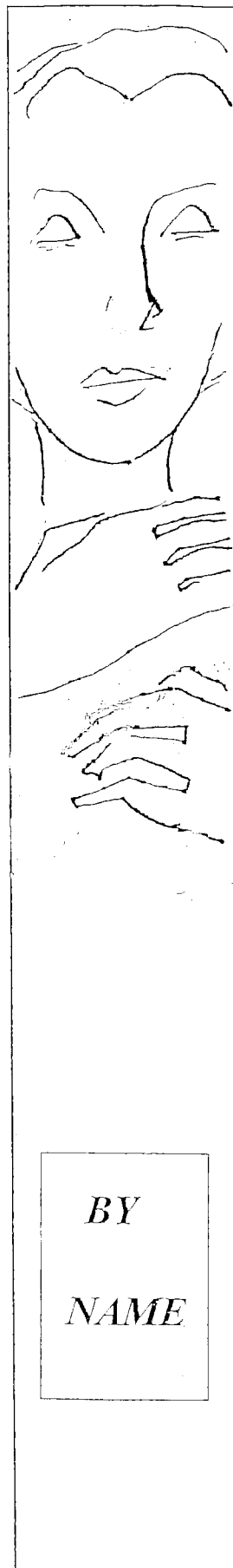
In our use of names, we are preparing the way for Jesus, who has already called each of us by name and keeps on calling until we recognise that call and follow him as he leads us to the Father.

“The shepherd of the sheep...calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”⁶

Just as the speaking of her name by the Risen Christ changed everything for Mary Magdalen, so when Christ calls our name and we respond, everything is changed for us. We and our friends are no different in that respect, for in Spred as in God’s kingdom, there is no them and us, only us.

Lisbeth Raeside
Director, Spred Glasgow, Scotland

1 Genesis 17:5, 2. Ibid 17.15 3. Mt.16:16-17 (New Jerusalem Bible translation) 4. Is. 43:1 5. 1 Sam. 3:4-10
6. John 10: 2-4



SPRED CALENDAR

Planning Meetings

Vicariate I Deanery A, B, C.

Prince of Peace, Lake Villa

Wed. May 15, 6:30

Vicariate I Deaneries D,E,F

St. Edna, Arlington Heights

Tues. May 21, 7:00

Vicariate II Deaneries A, E, F

St. Mary, Evanston

Wed. May 22, 7:00

Vicariate II Deaneries B, C, D

St. Josaphat, Chicago

Mon. May 20, 6:30

Vicariate III Deaneries A, B Vicariate IV Deanery A

St. Edward, Chicago

Thurs. May 23, 7:00

Vicariate III Deaneries C, E

Spred Center, Lowe Ave

Wed. June 5, 7:00

Vicariate IV Deaneries B, C, E

St. Hugh, Lyons

Mon. May 20, 7:00

Vicariate V Deanery A, B, C

St. Rene Goupil, Chicago

Thurs. May 23, 7:00

Vicariate V Deanery D E

St. Linus, Oak Lawn

Thurs. May 30, 7:00

Vicariate VI Deaneries B, D

St. Benedict, Blue Island

Thurs. May 28, 7:00

SPRED

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Helper Catechist Training April 6

Spanish, 1-6 pm Spred Center Chicago, 312-842-1039

English, 11-4 pm Queen of Angels Spred, 4412 N.

Western. Register 773-588-0614 o

www.queenofangelsspred.org

SPRED FAMILY LITURGY, 11am April 7, May 5

MAMRE SPRING DINNER DANCE

FUNDRAISER

APRIL 28, DRURY LANE, OAKBROOK

Observation Spred Center Chicago

6-10 and 22+ groups, April 29, May 13

11-16 groups, April 30, May 14.