

Name
Luke 9:18-22

Deacon George Collins

There is a famous quote, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." A rose is a beautiful flower in color, shape and bouquet as well as sentiment. So we could call a rose a stink weed but it would still smell sweet and desirable. Can you imagine giving the one you love a dozen red stink weeds for a birthday or an anniversary? Remember it is the essence of what the flower is and symbolizes that is important; not the name.

When we meet someone for the first time we usually ask for their name. So names do have some importance as a means of identity; but it fails to tell us who the person really is. However, the essence of what we are is superior to the name. God knows us by name from the foundation of the world and called us into existence by that name. We were not called into existence by a social security number but by a name that has dignity. The essence of what we are is of our own choosing and free will.

Names have a life all their own as they live on after we die. Some live on as heroes or as villains. Names should generate family ties and reflect meanings of goodness, integrity and tradition. I was once asked to baptize a child, "Asparagus Jones". The only connection I could make with the name was that maybe the family members were vegetarians. How about "Rhubarb Smith" or "Pumpkin Pie." I insisted on a Christian name. Be careful about names - for children they could become a disaster rather than a fanciful name of the moment.

When I thought about this gospel passage I couldn't help reflect on a movie I saw as a child. It was the animated film called, "Alice in Wonderland." Alice was walking along a country road when she met a huge rabbit. He was dressed in pants, a jacket, shirt, bow tie, shoes and a hat. He carried a big pocket watch in his hand. Alice

wanted to talk to him but he just rushed on by, looking at the watch and saying, "I'm late, I'm late for a very important date. Good bye, hello, good bye, I'm late, I'm late I'm late!" Then he entered a large hole in the hillside and disappeared. Alice crept in after him and she entered a very strange world. A world of a mad hatter's tea party; a world where the queen of hearts threatened to chop off everyone's head. A world where rooms and doors shrunk and tear drops became oceans and many more disturbing experiences. Alice became distraught and tried to find the exit so she could return to her normal world; but she was hopelessly lost. As she wandered along the path crying, she came across a large tree. Laying on the branches was a huge cat with big stripes and large white eyes with large horn-rimmed glasses. The cat was smoking a water pipe and blowing big round white smoke rings. She started to ask the cat the way to the exit. The cat, seeing that she was different from everyone else in Wonderland, interrupted her with a question. "Who are you?" "I'm Alice and -" "No--no--no who are you?" "I'm Alice and -" "No--no--no who are you?" Finally, Alice replied, "I'm lost and I want to go home!" The cat replied "Now we're getting some where."

That seems to be the essence of this gospel passage; "Now we're getting somewhere." Jesus asked His apostles, "Who do people say that I am?" In other words, "Do people know who I am?" They said, "Some say John the Baptist—" "No--no--no--who am I?" "Some say Elijah—" "No--no--no--who am I?" "Some say a prophet—" "No--no--no--Who am I?" Then Jesus said "Who do you say that I am?" Peter quickly responded, "You are the Messiah, the son of God!" Now we're getting somewhere.

Peter did not get this knowledge on his own, but from the Holy Spirit. Peter was anointed by the Holy Spirit with this revelation. In time the rest of the world will come to this knowledge after He goes to Jerusalem and to death and resurrection. Peter could not yet understand how the Son of God could understand this tragedy; so he began to argue with Jesus. No--no--no You can't do this! Jesus reply was rather sharp: "Get out of my sight you Satan!" Stop

tempting me by human standards. Peter took one step forward but two steps back. Now we're not getting anywhere.

This is a powerful reflection for us to make about ourselves; who are you? Identify yourselves! I'm Mary. No--no--no. Who are you? I'm John. No--no--no--no. Who are you? We are adopted children of God and we want to go home. Now, we are getting somewhere! Just like Alice we want to leave this wonderland of strife, greed, hurt, disappointments, selfishness, concerns, poverty, slavery, hate and killings. Just like Alice, we want to go home where there is peace, comfort, security and love. My heart is restless, oh Lord, until it rests in You, my God.

Now the question the Lord put to His apostles is directed at us. "Who do you say that I am?" Who do you say the Lord is? If you respond, "You are the Son of God," good! Now we're getting somewhere. If you believe what your heart tells you, then consider this. What do you say the Eucharist is? Holy Communion. No--no--no. What do you say the Eucharist is? The bread of life. No--no--no. If your faith tells you it is the Son of God, now we're getting somewhere. If your faith tells you the Eucharist is God himself manifested before our eyes in the form of the second person of the blessed Trinity, now we're really getting somewhere! Blessed are you for no man has revealed this to you, except through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Now you have it, and you can be safe in the hands of the Lord for you are home and nothing can hurt you.

If we truly believe this, then we must show respect for the Son of God. Respect shows our desire to love Him, our desire to be near Him, our desire to be in His company as long as possible, our desire to act in a way that is pleasing to Him. To truly be brothers and sisters, considerate of one another and to our neighbor. For faith calls us to be lovers. Now we have really gotten somewhere, for the Holy Spirit is within us and He does not run away, He does not desert us. If we do not accept the Eucharist as the body of Christ, "then get behind me Satan." We are beginning to think as Peter did, and as man thinks; not as God thinks or wills. Man thinks of worldly

concerns. Tight parking, early bird specials, boring homilies, crying children, warm air conditioning, crowded pews, scandals, waiting to be entertained rather than participating at Mass. If we focus on the Son of God as in our Eucharist, then we can really call our faith a rose and not a stink weed. NOW WE REALLY HAVE SOMETHING; A NAME CALLED CHRISTIAN.