



## Wednesday Prayer

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Our names, who (and whose) we are

*“What is your name?”*

**Luke 8:30**

Before Jesus cast out the demons from the man of Gerasene, the first question he asks him is “What is your name?” He wasn’t afraid of this man, crying out in the graveyard, of whom even strong chains could not bind him. No, all Jesus cared about was learning the man’s name.

My father named me after his grandfather. Names matter. They help us orient ourselves and find our bearings. Names tell us who (and whose) we are. For the Gerasene, his reply was, “My name is ‘Legion,’” for he was possessed by many demons. In other words, he’d forgotten his name... his very essence of self. Jesus came to set things right and to literally give him back to himself.

For those at risk of, or who are caught up in sexual abuse and exploitation, it is not uncommon to have neglectful, abusive, or simply absent father figures. Even for those with caring and nurturing fathers, it’s the job of every young person to “try on many hats” as they figure out their identity and make a name for themselves. This Father’s Day, I hope the memories of fathers will bless more than depress. That you will find someone in your life who knows your name and calls out the best in you.

After the Gerasene was set free by Jesus, it was his own people who took up his chains – chains of fear. They begged Jesus to leave their village. Only the healed man wished to go with him; but Jesus sent him back to his own people – people who didn’t know what to do with him – to bear witness in the name of Jesus.

As people of faith, we may not know what to do with sex workers, or victims of sexual exploitation, or those whom society has cast off. We use names that dehumanize (whore, sleaze, easy, cheap, used, etc.) because of what has happened to them in life. Why not start by getting to know their true names? Or by exploring with them a new name? As Paul said to the Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female – for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (3:28) May we come to see in each other how we are all related.

**Let us pray: O God, help us to love those society has cast off, by calling out the best in them and ourselves. Turn the walls between us into tables of reconciliation, where we might look into each other’s eyes, unafraid and learn each other’s names. Amen.**

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