

St Peter's, Ealing

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019

Easter Day Mass and baptism of Tyler Stephen Gee

### What is in a name?

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Last week I nearly got brained by the parish sacristan and half the congregation. On announcing this service I suggested we would be having the pleasure of baptising young Taylor Gee; not a clever thing to do and in my defence it was a very busy Sunday Mass.

But names are important and it is important to get them, right. A bit of a professional problem for me as I am notorious for forgetting names when I'm introduced for the first time. I've tried everything; picture memory, repeating the persons name back to them and making sure I use it several times in the first couple of sentences. But I always come a cropper somewhere. The worst thing for me are those who have a Christian name for a surname. I just get them confused. I have a very good friend, known him for years and I still call him Stephen Roberts instead of Robert Stephens...or is it the other way around.

If you get names wrong people can be very hurt. They can feel undervalued and even abused. They can feel you don't take due care with them and that you are not taking them seriously. In some cultures it is even more important as names are seen as having value and power in themselves. To have someone's name is to have control over them. In simple terms you can call upon some one if you know what they are called. In more sinister views the knowing of the name allows power to be held over them. In the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament this was true and is one of the reasons we don't have a name for God. God simply says 'I am', I am existence, I am being, I am; YHWH.

Today we celebrate the revelation of Jesus' name, Christ. It is not his surname but his name. Christ, Messiah, Saviour. The empty tomb professes to all who believe that The Christ is with us, risen from the dead Jesus, as Christ proclaims God's love to us.

How do we know this? Because now we can call upon God as our Father, now we know God, through Jesus.

Tyler today will be baptised with the name of Christ, he will be given his Christian name. It may seem a little odd to some of you that we are baptising on Easter Day. This was the tradition the the Early Church. Catechists would be prepared throughout the year and on this most holy of days would be admitted into the family of Christ, be given their Christian names on this day at this service. It has only taken my 30 years of ministry to get to do this. Today, on this most holy of days when the love of God for all is revealed in the risen Christ, we get to admit one new member to God's family, we get to make a new Christian in Tyler.

Yet this also a time when all Christians are encouraged to return to their baptismal vows and to renew them in the presence of God and the church. To reclaim for themselves their Christian name, their place in the family of God, made ready for them by the risen Christ who, in passing through the waters of death, has destroyed the gates of death and hell and opened to us all the way to life everlasting.

This is a great day on which to bring Tyler to baptism. It is also a great day for you. If you are a Christian, rededicate your self to God. As we complete the decisions and make our declaration for Tyler I encourage you to join in and say them for yourselves. Remember that love God has for you and God's desire for you to make a closer walk with him and take them to heart. Be renewed in the power of God's spirit that you may be born again to walk with a fresh step the way of Christ.

What is in a name? Everything is in a name, especially if that name proclaims you a follower of Jesus, the Christ.