

Easter Day  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

March 27, 2016  
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## **Your Sacred Name**

I was a happy boy in grade school. I had friends and the whole outdoors, and life was good. I was not, however, the most popular boy in High School. My dating career was less than spectacular. I suffered the stinging rejections of the objects of my crushes more than once. Frankly, I was immature, insecure, and gun-shy! As I approached my 20's, then, I was delighted to be dating a delightful young lady. This was somehow different! She was beautiful, and she understood me. She lifted me out of the mire of my previous rejections, and we could talk for ages and love every minute of it. When she said my name she had every fiber of my being listening!

Pretty soon the idea began to drift across my mind. You know, maybe she is the one. Maybe she is the one with whom I want to spend my life. The time came for The Biggie. I wasn't romantic, you know, down on my knee with a gold ring and all that, for I had been born on the back side of a small country in South America, and I really didn't know very much about all these things. Somehow we got it worked out, and on June 3, 1978, we were united in marriage, and so began a life-long adventure. I really had no idea what I was doing. I just knew that the love that we shared called me into a different way of being—and I responded—and it's been quite a ride!

In retrospect, it has been a ride into the mystery of love, love that requires the best of me, my truest self and my ability to give of myself, and a ride into the mystery of what it means to be loved, the amazing, transforming reality that there is someone in the world who, as the private investigator Devine tells Beverly Clark in the 2004 movie, "Shall We Dance," "bears witness to your life." I never could have told you what it was all about before, and that is most certainly for the best, for if I had known I probably would have run away screaming! I gave in, so to speak, and my life with this woman has been the one most transforming human relationship I have ever known.

The meaning of this Easter day is like that, only a whole lot bigger. The disciples have spent 3 years with Jesus. They have come to admire him, fear him, wonder at him, and profoundly love him. They had no idea what kind of ride it would be at the beginning. For so many of them Jesus had very unceremoniously said, "Follow me," and they had left fishing nets and business tables and followed him. When he was murdered by the Jewish authorities it sent every one of them into a tailspin. The Jesus they had known was gone forever.

Mary stands for all the disciples. She stands at the end, the tomb of her heart, the burial of all that is good. She is split open by grief, beside herself with sorrow. Great suffering, says Richard Rohr, is one of the gateways to the unitive mind, The mind that truly knows how to love, and the greatest suffering is for love. All her hopes have crumbled into dust. She is reduced to nothing but suffering love.

In that nothingness she hears her name. It is not like her mother, "Mary, why haven't you cleaned your room yet?" It is not like her friends, "Oh, Mary, you look fantastic in that dress, but you need to do something with the shoes!" Nor is it like her grandmother, "Mary, when are you going to meet some fine young man and settle down and have kids?" or even Judas, "What a waste! This perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor!" This is the naming of love that reaches beyond the great veil of death, through the very cosmos to the beginning of time, and calls forth in her not the Mary of her relationships, but the Mary of her essence, her inner being, her true self, what she has always been since the beginning of time in the mind of God.

What she does not know yet is that this name is the key to her life. This name calls forth in her such a fundamental transformation of being that living by this name will transform her world. In Christ's resurrection Mary is raised from the dead as well, and it will be quite a ride!

We, too, are Mary. Life starts out beautiful. I love baptizing babies! Whatever the circumstances of the parents, the child is a gift from God, fresh from the heavenly home. There is evidence to show that children are usually better at altruism and empathy than adults. It's like we are born with a profound knowledge of the unity of all things, and then forget it. That forgetting happens when our egos decide to take control. Our world descends into either/or, you vs. me, mine vs. not-mine, and what I can get that you can't—and what I can keep from you. This sounds like an elementary school playground, but a glance at our political process right now will show you that the game is much more serious as we grow older, for we imagine that the stakes are higher. Our house of Bishops recently issued a pastoral letter about immigration in which they deplored the move to sacrifice the good of many for the security of a few. (The stakes are indeed high, for they are moral as well as economic.) Dualistic either-or thinking when applied to the big questions will always prove inadequate. It will always eventually put us in a place where we seek to justify cruelty, and put a price on love.

So we end up in darkness, the darkness of Mary on her way to the tomb, the victim of out-of-control egos, of power-games gone horribly wrong. I can imagine how alone she must have felt, certainly as alone as many of us feel, alienated as we are from so many and often for so long that we have forgotten what it was like not to be alone. We find

ourselves crowded in on all sides by faces at which we would rather not look. Christ's tomb is found among us in those dark and lonely places in our hearts, in those dark and lonely places in our society, and in the darkness and loneliness of the world's poor and marginalized, weak, hungry, addicted and imprisoned.

All we can do is what Mary did, and stand there and weep—but if we weep rather than rail, if we allow our hearts to be broken open for love rather than keep them tightly shut, if we allow the tomb to be opened rather than protect the Roman seal, then we will hear our own sacred name pronounced by the God of love, the God who calls us into divine community with God, and with one another. This is the God who sees you and me, not as masses, nor as numbers, but as beloved children: "Mary," "George," "Peter," Alfonso," Nadia," Rebecca," <insert your name.> When God speaks your name it is the name that names you, not as your parents did, nor as your friends or family do, or as your society knows you, but as God knows you, as a vital part of the image of God in creation, a desperately desired member of a cosmic family. Then we will know what resurrection from the dead means, not just because we saw an empty tomb and have hope for the poor, the suffering and the friendless, but because we have heard our own name pronounced by the God that died and rose again, and in hearing that name we, too, are raised from the dead.

Where are you this morning? In all honesty, before God and God alone, are you on the way to the tomb? Are you worried about how you are going to get to the relic of your loves, hurrying to do the only thing you can do with the pain and anguish of your life? Are you at the tomb, standing in dumbfound amazement and even deeper grief to find that life has dealt you a double-whammy. Not only is he dead, but now even his body is gone! When will it end? Are you weeping with nothing left to do or give, at your rope's end, and your hands are slipping off the knot at the end, empty and broken?

God speaks your name this morning. "Mary," "George," "Peter," Alfonso," Nadia," Rebecca," <insert your name.> Beloved child, known by God, desired by God, you are part of the great tapestry that God is weaving in creation. Your place is not the center but it is yours, and only yours, as you manifest in your living what God has manifest in you.

Maybe you have heard your name. You see how everything belongs in the love of God. You also see how many ways small-mindedness has ripped and torn the fabric God is weaving, and you are ready to go into Galilee and spread the word, to show how God has joined us in our alienation, suffering and pain, and how God has spoken our name!