

GLIMPSE

Names

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C. S. Lewis wrote, "The most emphatic noise is the one you are trying not to listen to." Dripping faucets, ticking clocks, crying babies during sermons, unless the sermon is boring, and such audio distractions can become all we hear while trying not to. We do tend to hear what we want to, what's personal. In airports we hear paging for many others and hardly pay any attention. If our own precious name were to be announced, we would say, "That name sounds very familiar. Wow! That's my name!"

We were speaking the other day about the names of people whose names also were what they did for a living. The baseball pitchers, Rollie Fingers and Bill Hands, our old family dentist, Adrian Meany, the chiropractor, Bump, priests by the names of Pope, Lord, Grace, Sexton and of course, Fr. Priest are real and true.

Perhaps you know other name-doers yourself. Do they do what they do, because that is their name? Most likely not. The more important question for all of us is: Are we what we do? Is my doing the same as my being? We can so easily define ourselves and our worth by what we do. When I entered the Jesuits there were the Lay Brothers whose names we didn't know, because we knew them by what they did. There was Brother Taylor, who made cassocks, Brother Loafer, who would tell us he was saving souls, left and right. There was the Brother who rose earlier than the community to ring the five A.M. steeple bell, whom we of course called Br. Ding-a-ling. They were known by what they did, but were so much more than their doing, so very much more.

The big issue for us is from what or where do we get our value, our name. Is a good tree good because it bears good fruit, or is it good because it does what it should, bear fruit? When we doubt our

goodness, we will try to earn what we don't have, a sense of goodness within us. We have to earn it and of course it is fleeting and will have to be re-earned tomorrow. We are then as good only as our last performance. A thing does what it is. Who we are will be reflected, not only by what we do, but the manner, the spirit with which we do.

The distracting noises are those names which the past, the mistakes, the regrets, the negative life experiences try to keep us striving, by what we do, to be someone with whom we can live more easily. It is spiritually healthy for us to keep listening to our real names, our simple God-given names which have nothing to do with our doings. Our doings will reflect who God says we are. When we like our names, we will know it by how we are a blessing to others and how we assist God in helping others receive their real names. Receiving is more peaceful than achieving our names, and gratitude begets generosity.

It's only a glimpse.