

Ephesians 1:1-14

Psalm 114

Matthew 18:21-35

Collect for Proper 19

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor and all blessing.
Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation. – Canticle of Creation by St
Francis¹

What is in a name?²

These familiar words come from William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Juliet is complaining about Romeo's last name. A family connection that means nothing to her because her love for the individual exceeds any family hatred that has occurred before their relationship.

And yet there are Households divided.

The only thing that can reconcile them is the transformational power of love.

We each receive names in our lives, names by birth, names given at baptism, sometimes these names are given because we are unable to say the full name presented to us at a young age, or perhaps a name was given to us because of traits that we have.

My grandfather went by the name Red, because of his red hair.

My maiden name is White.

So, yes, his name was Red White.³

When I was growing up with this last name, I gave quite a bit of thanks that my parents did not name me Lilly or Snow.

And of course, in marriage I became A White Moon and my husband and I thought about all the names we would not name our children: Waxing, Waning, Harvest, Full, Blue, etc etc.

A name matters, given or bestowed, a name establishes relationships and connects us with the past and what is to come or even what we might have to overcome.

When you hear the name Mary, you might think of the mother of our Lord or perhaps your favorite Mary in your life: a Choir member (I think we have three?), a wife, sister, mother, a great aunt.

Whoever it might be, you are connected to that person and memory...by a name.

It is through Mary that we trace Jesus' lineage and his connection with humanity.

Naming in the bible established a relationship.

From "Adam," the name given from God to humanity as it is formed from "primal elements" (as our eucharistic prayer will soon say.)

To Adam and Eve naming all of the animals of creation- establishing community and relationship with all that existed.

Community, togetherness, the household of God.

And they all exist in the garden of Eden, that perfect community.
Until.
Humanity does what it unfortunately does best.
Humanity forgets to trust the love of God.
Humanity falls from grace,
Humanity returns love with brokenness...
and community becomes divided.

The story repeats itself over and over again.
Love is given, love is received.
Love is forgotten and brokenness is remembered.
Divisions are established.
People are cast out.
Names are taken in vain
and love is hungered FOR rather than received.

In the letter to Ephesians today, we hear **Paul** writing of our adoption into a household that adopts us through a sacrificial love that can mend all of humanity's brokenness. A household that accepts us for who we are and loves us into community. This household shows us the way to live and invites us to live in community with others. We are named and beloved. The household to which Paul speaks redeems the earthly households we might be a part of that leave us wanting more.⁴

In both Disney's Snow White and Cinderella the lead characters are craving acceptance for who they are. They have been left behind or lost and they find friends in the most unlikely of places. Animals have names and seem to work beside these humans to make the household a better space. It's a harmony that is loving and playful. Who can forget Gus Gus, the mouse in

Cinderella, who never quite got the task correct but was very much a part of the beloved family.⁵

With this same loving and cheerful spirit, St Francis speaks to our relationship with creation in his own time of being cast out of his own family. While he, too, sought his place in the community that rejected him, he writes his beautiful Cantic of Creation. Francis speaks to God's love and humanity's relationship with creation. You can almost hear the conversation and joy he has for brother sun and sister moon (please don't ever call me that.) in creation.

Eric Doyle remarks that the cantic speaks, "*to love* is to be in relation with another, creating a bond between the self and a part of the world, and so ultimately between self and all creation. If one person can love one other person, one unique animal, one flower, one special place on this earth, there is no reason in principle why that love cannot stretch out to embrace every single creation to the furthest reaches of space."⁶

Love that stretches is the love that we have been given by God.

In creation, we see the circle of care and community.

We seek to stretch to share the love that we have received and are promised.

We are to call by name the flowers, the birds, the water as we recognize that we, too, are in relationship or **kinship** rather than **consumer-ship** with creation.

In our Gospel reading today we hear of debts forgiven and debts demanded.

Peter asking “How generous must I be with how much forgiveness that I give?”

To be fair, what Peter offers in the number “seven times” is quite generous. It’s more than the policy of three strikes and you are out.

Jesus says to Peter, “friend, you should forgive not just seven times but seventy seven times”essentially, Peter, your forgiveness should stretch more than you can count on your fingers and toes put together.

Love for community is bigger than seven.

A legacy of love digs deeper than keeping score,
love invites changed relationships, transformation.

Jesus’ following parable illustrates the way forgiveness should be shared not counted. Rather than tracking tit for tat, forgiveness should be given as God has given to us, in uncalculating love.⁷

The forgiveness of the King in our parable today should be emulated not exploited.

The slave should share the grace that was given to him, not create further division in subsequent relationships.

Share what has been received.

Break the cycle.

Think Beyond preserving self only.

And so it is as we live in this household, named as beloved children of God.

We, too are called to see the need that creation, all of it, has for reconciliation.

In seeing creation as community, we too, can be stewards of care.
Seeking to change the cycle,
rather than taking the easy way and only taking what we have been given.

With fires, earthquakes, disastrous flooding, 90degree temperatures in Boston in September, hurricanes threatening Maine, it is hard to ignore the changes that are occurring in creation, in our world.

We must work towards building up practices that build community, that celebrate creation and community together, recognizing the fragility of all of creation and stretching beyond our own immediate needs.

We need to pause and contemplate our own actions and responsibilities towards how we walk amongst the garden we have been blessed with and how then, we too can see God's own love at work, opening our eyes to see both the beauty and our responsibility of care.

For the next three weeks we will be continuing a season of Creation Care, I invite you to go deeper with us in Prayer, Learning, Acting and Sharing as we recognize our own habits of creation care and division. We will take the time to name our connections and creations' belovedness. We will seek to reconcile the two, reclaiming and working to restore that garden of Eden relationship where all of humanity began.

You, too, are called by name to this work.

We, too, are called to speak by name the work that is to be done, together. And our answer, just like at baptism, is "I will with God's Help."

¹ As we begin our 3-week Creation Care sermon series and educational forums, I could not resist sharing a small portion of St. Francis' Canticle for Creation. To read the whole canticle you can find the rest of the canticle here: <https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=3188>

² I love digging deeper into phrases we use, often without remembering when it was first coined, <https://nosweatshakespeare.com/quotes/soliloquies/whats-in-a-name/>

³ My grandfather was a really interesting fellow. I am totally not biased. He does have his own wiki page (I did not create, by the way.) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Kermit_White

⁴ For those of you reading the Revised Common Lectionary, you might be wondering why we are reading Ephesians. As we begin our 2023-2024 program year at Trinity Church, our theme of “Companions in the Household of God” is taken from Paul’s writings to the Ephesians. We began our reading of Ephesians September 10th and will focus our Adult Education Forums on Ephesians starting October 15th. Now is the chance for you to dig into this book of the Bible with us!

⁵ More on Gus, the mouse. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Jaq_and_Gus

⁶ *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality* by [Ilia Delio O.S.F.](#) [Keith Douglass Warner O.F.M.](#) [Pamela Wood](#); page 88

⁷ From George MacLeod’s prayer “*The Chaos of Uncalculating Love*” <http://bobhostetler.blogspot.com/2008/08/chaos-of-uncalculating-love.html>