



June 7th, 2020
Trinity Sunday
The Rev. Anthony C. Estes, Associate Rector
Sermon: What's in a Name?
Genesis 1:1-2; 4a

My middle name is Carlos, and the reason why that is a funny story is because my mother did not want to give me my father's name which is Claude. My father's sister suggested Carlos and here I am.

Names mean things. They are more than just the way we identify each other. I think they convey a hope, a wish, simply by virtue of what the word means, what the name means. And according to thinkbabynames.com, Carlos is a word from Spanish and German origin which means "free man."

That's something I have been reflecting on these last couple of days as our nation is yet again is caught up in the visceral tension about race in this country.

I think that name "*Free Man*" is a wish and a hope that my parents have for me, that I have for myself, that I have for people of color, people who look like me, for all of us created in the image and likeness of God...that we could live free of hate, of anger, of fatal misunderstandings. All of that is conveyed in my middle name.

When I arrived to Spirit of Hope Church in February of 2018, I found a people with a vast history of serving God and serving the community. I also found that they perhaps had a struggle with names. You see, before it became "Spirit of Hope", it was called "Trinity". And even before it was called "Trinity", it had a couple of other names. It had changed names a few times before it settled on Trinity.

And I think as one who has all of the benefits and the liabilities of looking at that history now, I believe I can interpret that although they were trying to figure what they were going to call themselves, they did not have a question about who God was calling them to be and what God was calling them to do: To serve God, to worship God and to serve their community and their neighborhood to the glory of God alone. And that's something that's continued for over 140 years, regardless of what name was on the door.

And part of that history — a good part of that history — at Trinity is shared with you, the people of Christ Church Detroit. There has been a partnership, a relationship of mutual love and connection, that has brought these two congregations together that spans over 40 years.

There was a joint committee between the two churches that worked together, a covenant of understanding, a promise to work together to bring about God's mission in the world and in our little corner of Detroit.

And some of that tradition has continued on also in the Saturday soup kitchen that operated at Trinity Church. I've met many of you who have told me that you have volunteered with that soup kitchen on Saturdays over the years.

Of all my interactions with members of Trinity, with friends of Trinity, all of them point to the vitality of that Saturday soup kitchen...the hundreds upon hundreds of people who have come through those doors to receive meals, to receive clothing, to receive love.

And we did it with you, Christ Church, with your help.

Although Trinity has closed, I am so grateful to bear witness to the truth, the names, the hopes that Christ Church Detroit and Trinity Episcopal Church have brought and bring to our city.

And so, with that struggle to try to figure out what you're going to name something — I am sure the first humans struggled with what they were going to name things as the story from Genesis tells us — names reveal something about the one who names. They reveal that there is a hope that is being projected onto the person, the place or the thing that has been named.

We have been named, we have been marked, we have been created in the image and likeness of God...the God that reveals God's self to us as triune, a community of persons.

Being named, being created, being made, being marked in that way invites us into relationship with the God who named, with the God who created, with the God who made us. It reveals that God desires to be known...and that we have a mirrored desire to be known to God and to each other.

That is what Trinity Sunday is about. Yes, we're lifting up the history and legacy of Trinity Episcopal Church and Christ Church, but we are also celebrating the fact that in the Trinity, the Holy Trinity, God makes himself known to us as source, as Word, as spirit, as creator, as redeemer, as sustainer, as our friend.

And because we share that image and likeness with God, as created beings, we must always strive to see those same personas, those same personalities, those same character traits in each other...that no matter how the world is turning now, creation is inherently good.

And sometimes we get in our own way. We name things other than the way God named them, and we regard them as such. And that is a denial of the goodness of creation.

What we must do is to reclaim those names. We must reclaim our identity in Christ, our identity in God, our identity given to us by the Holy Spirit that we walk in light, that we walk in truth...

And that whatever God desires for us, even though we try and we strive to figure out what that is...it is good. Our present, our past and our future is to be one of goodness, is to be one of relationship with each other.

So what does it all mean?

It means that with God's help, that as God began to create *then*, as God continues to create *now*, by God's word read and proclaimed, by the spirit of God living among us, active in us, operating through us, that God's creation is still being unveiled...that God's creative energy is still active in the world. That no matter what future we believe we are creating for ourselves, God is ultimately at work. God is ultimately in charge and God is creating us anew, day after day after day.

Will you not see it? Will you not bear witness to it? Will you not name the things that are meant to bring death? Will you not name them as opportunities for new life in God and in Jesus Christ?

I am very grateful for the opportunity that I have had to lead Trinity. I am very grateful to be celebrating one year of ordained, priestly ministry.

And I look forward to the reality of God that is being created, that is being revealed, in me with you as your Associate at Christ Church Detroit.

I solicit your prayers. I solicit your prayers and your welcome to the people of Trinity Episcopal Church. I pray that they find safe harbor here. And I also pray for the success of God's mission in North Corktown, no matter what that is.

And I pray for our neighbors there...that they continue to find the life and the presence of the Triune God at work among them.

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