**Called by Name**

Prayer: REC Conference Tuesday Morning 2 June 2015 Terrigal

We come into the Lord’s presence...

And we listen to God’s Word: *A reading from the Prophet Isaiah*

But now thus says the Lord,

The One who created you, O Jacob,

The One who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

And the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God,

The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom,

Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight,

And honoured, and I love you.

(Isa 43:1-4)

 *The Word of the Lord.*

 *“I have called you by name, you are mine.” (Isa 43:1)*

This morning we invite you into a brief reflection on what it means to be called by God.

As Christians we believe that through baptism we are called and sent. But have we ever stopped to dwell upon *the way* God calls us. The manner. The sound. The texture of that call.

When we call someone, we usually use their name. And the *way* we sound their name is very revealing.

EG: Think of the different ways you might call out to your child.

* “Jessica, Jessica [*spoken gently*], are you there honey?”
* “Jessica! Jessica, [*spoken harshly*], I’m *speaking* to you.”

Same name, but a very different sound. The message is already present in the sound of the name.

Over centuries of Jewish bible reflection, the Rabbis/Sages commented on an interesting feature in the way God calls the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. Let’s listen:

* But the angel of the Lord called to [Abraham] from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”

And he said, “Here I am.” (Gen 22:11)

* God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob.”

And he said, “Here I am.” (Gen 46:2)

* God called to [Moses] out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!”

And he said, “Here I am.” (Exodus 3:4)

* Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel, Samuel!”

And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:10)

Drawing from their storytelling traditions, and in their wonderful creative, playful, insightful way, the Jewish sages asked: why does the Lord call twice? Isn’t once enough? Why the double call?

Traditional Jewish interpreters are deeply attuned to the use of repetition in the bible. For them it signals a double or twofold meaning, or a particular emphasis, or that there is something *more* which we are meant to hear. What might that ‘more’ be?

One notable opinion among the sages: the repetition of someone’s name is a sign of endearment. Thus God is communicating not just that the person is being called, but that he is being called with great love; this call comes from heart to heart; it is a mission born of intimacy, relationship.

Now, there are many other calls in the bible that don’t make use of this double-name device. So we don’t want to overplay this insight. But it is an insight that has a place in the tradition. And it is a lovely one.

So… As we go forth into this day, let us simply listen to the Lord called each of us by name… twice.

We will listen to a David Haas’ song “You are Mine”. As you listen, in your heart, hear the Lord call your name, twice. And ask yourself: In what way is the Lord trying to catch my attention? What does the Lord want me to hear, not just the first time, but the second.

David Haas “You are Mine” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgm9lkTNQmc>

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Further insights to pick up in the Mass:

Jesus with Martha & Mary (Luke 10:38-42)

We hear Jesus say: Martha, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.” (Luke 10:41)

Two points: The call to mission

1. requires a deep listening
2. comes from and leads to love relationships

The Martha/Mary story is a text which affirms that our mission, active as it is, is grounded in a deep listening to the call of God. We have done some deep listening on this conference, especially in our retreat space on Monday.

Recap from this morning: In Jewish tradition, the repetition in the Lord’s call is sometimes interpreted as an indication of endearment. The call is not simply to a job, the call is into deeper intimacy with God who calls.

This is a particularly beautiful insight when we consider that we are sent on mission to the poor, the alienated, the margins. If *we* are called lovingly by name, then our mission is not just to a cause, but to unique persons, each of whom has a name, a story, a particular way in which they need to be loved.

How can we communicate that extra dimension? As we go about our lives, how can we indicate through the way we speak, the way we gesture, the way we act, that we reach out from love and not just duty. From our hearts and not just our heads. We reach out to some*one*, and not just *any*one.

And this is true, even when our task is to say or do something that is difficult for the other to receive. Think of Jesus rebuking Martha. And it is really is a sharp rebuke!

Yet, if we follow the Rabbis’ lead here, we can also hear his address to her (Martha, Martha) as a sign of his affection for her, and an invitation to deeper friendship.

(And indeed, we know that the Gospels seem to indicate that Jesus was very close to this little household at Bethany. Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus were close friends of his.)

Conclusion:

We are sent forth on mission, yes. But how? We are sent forth to listen! And to love!

Amen.

Further music links:

David Haas “You are Mine” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgm9lkTNQmc>

Same but different pics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14pPevY5sd8>

You are Mine piano instrumental <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4Rmr-UAbn0>

Be not Afraid (John Michael Talbot) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDClyf9jjTE>

Be not Afraid (St Louis Jesuits, Bob Dufford) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snmwD6d9Xo4>

On Eagles Wings <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFcqDeiriGw>