

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF



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Dear Parishioners,

*He calls his own sheep by name....*

We have probably all met someone who can enter a room, and when leaving recall each person's name. It's an impressive feat. We link it with that person's attention to each individual and not just to the group. There's a personal touch that creates a link with the visitor and each of those in the room.

God knows our name: this is a biblical expression to illustrate that God is not some distant Being, unconnected with our individual life. He is the cause of our individuality. He knows it from inside, so to speak.

When, in the Book of Genesis, God has completed his great work of creation, he casts about for a "helpmate" for Adam. So what does he do? He parades each animal before Adam and Adam gives each creature its name (Gn 2:18-20). This is a figurative and literary way to say that Adam is set in a special relationship with all of creation and with each created thing. But in none of these does Adam find his partner, and so God casts Adam into a deep sleep; Adam's partner comes from himself, his adequate partner is in some way another "self".

Parents choose a name for their child carefully. The name has a meaning for the parents, and the parents want to describe the relationship between the child and themselves through the use of a name. Naming a child is not a thoughtless act.

So when, in John's Gospel chosen for this Sunday, St. John says that Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls each sheep by its name, this is stating that no one is lost to God. No one is invisible to God. No one is simply part of a "herd" without God also knowing one's individuality, which God has, in fact, created.

We do not worship an unknown and unknowing God. We are not cut off from our Creator. In creating us, God establishes a personal relationship between Him and us. He is infinite, we are finite, but it is God who reaches out across the abyss that separates us, like the arm of God in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel that stretches across the firmament to touch the finger of Adam: an act of creation, and an act of knowledge, of relationship: "We love, because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

Fr. Philip Creurer  
*Pastor*