

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



What's in a Name?

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31-32

In this short statement, Jesus is recorded as using Simon's name no fewer than three times and what a difference that must have made to the impact of His words and to the relationship between them!

We have probably all had the experience in a crowded room, with a hubbub of conversation all around us, of someone, somewhere mentioning our name and we hear it above everything else that is being said. Or we glance at a page of writing that happens to have our name somewhere in it and it leaps out at us. We seem to be tuned to the sound of our name or the sight of it in print.

Our names are special to us or, as a teacher once said to me, our names are like music to our ears. They are a kind of shorthand for all that we are as people. What we are is poured into our name. In Bible times and indeed, up to fairly recently in the western world, parents gave attention to the meaning of the name that they chose for their children. They poured into the name all that they wanted the child to become. When God gave a new name and Abram became Abraham or Jacob became Israel, the new name showed what He saw them becoming.

The names of those we teach are like music to their ears. Learning their names, remembering them and using them is vital to the development of classroom relationships. Just observe pupils' reactions when we get their names wrong or, worse still, when we call them by the name of that older brother or sister we taught a few years ago! Knowing their names is not simply or even mainly important for the control that it gives us in the classroom – it is vital to the development of a community of learning, to the establishment of those bonds within which we learn and teach together.

Lord, called Jesus because you save people from their sins, forgive us our failures to remember and use the names of those we teach and help us to develop those classroom relationships that mould us together into a community of learning. Amen.