

St Pius & St Anthony 24th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

What is in a name? That seems to be what Jesus is asking. What is in a name? Either names of people, or the names of places. Names are a big deal. It's all the buzz now in college sports (even in high school sports?) about NIL (Name, Image, Likeness) for athletes. And naming rights for buildings are a big deal! (*I hear news about expansion/big renovations coming at MSU Sports Center*). I remember back when I was student chaplain at a psychiatric hospital in Indianapolis, that summer brought all kinds of uproar & drama when the Hoosier Dome was renamed "RCA Dome". People were tore up, & complained, "How could they do that? What a loss of local identity & sell out to big business!" Of course, that Dome, the whole building is now gone. Replaced in 2008, with Lucas Oil Stadium. But naming rights are big deal. Last month-August, I heard a news report, that Florida International University Stadium (then called Panthers' field), entered a 10-year deal with Cuban American music rapper Pitbull, that for 1.2 million a year the building would be renamed 'Pitbull Stadium'. First of its kind deal for **college**. He didn't attend the school, but as longtime resident, he identifies/loves with Miami-Dade (*one nickname of his is 'Mr 305' which is zipcode of Miami*). Maybe it is a pure donation to the city/school, it might be entirely philanthropy on his part, but conveniently it brings benefits - such as a couple executive suites (and special parking passes) for every game, & he gets to write a new anthem song for team (imagine all the play), & he gets complete use of the stadium for ten days a year – (*his own venue operation-a way of telling Ticketmaster monopoly to fly a kite*) among other benefits (*like his brand vodka drinks being exclusive offering in the suites*).

Why do I bring these examples up? Because **names and naming** are what Jesus is into, in our gospel reading today. Jesus asks, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27) Basically, He asks, "**What's my name to people on the street?**" Of course, Jesus is not really interested in conducting a popularity poll on Himself. He uses this question to lead into the more intimate question of His own apostles, "Who do **YOU** say I am?" (Mark 8:29) But I find it so interesting to point out WHERE (what place) this question of names comes up. It is at **Caesarea Philippi**. A place named after two powerful worldly leaders: the great emperor Caesar and King Herod Philip – (Think of Caesarea Philippi as like Stalingrad or Ho Chi Min City) Named such, they glorify and exalt the human tyrants that Lord authority over others. But more than that, Caesarea Philippi was not only such an ego-monument to king and emperor, but the city also housed the temple shrine of Greek God Pan-a cave sanctuary that was supposed to be a place of revelation of new Gods, due to Pan's association with revelry & raucous debauchery (music

drink & seduction) – It was a Greek museum celebration of IDOLS, so much so that according to 1 Kings 12:26-28 the first King of the Hebrew tribes up North, Jereboam, created two golden calves-idols for the Hebrews to worship instead of going to Jerusalem down south. So, since Jesus uses this location (Caesarea Philippi) to pop the question to His apostles as to what they call/name Him, Jesus is setting up this scene to be a double revelation of His divinity (who He is and How He is different than worldly idols). First, by Peter's confession, Jesus is revealed to be the anointed one-the Messiah-Christ (Jesus is God – Here is His divinity). And secondly, Jesus is revealed to be a special kind of divine - not a self-serving, power clinging, and abusive lord like Caesar and Herod, but a Selfless, Saving Messiah sent to serve His subjects, and even suffering for them. This is reflected in Jesus' statement in Mark 8:30, that no one should tell others about Him (yet!). Because He is a different divinity, Jesus is a humble servant leader, not seeking attention/glory, like Herod and Caesar, who like buildings-cities named after themselves. But not just avoiding popular spotlighting, we see Jesus take extra steps to outline just what kind of divinity He reveals. Jesus came to lift others up, to always give to others and to sacrifice Himself in His service of them. In Mark 8:31, Jesus lays out how He will suffer for his people, and be rejected, even killed, before being glorified. AND this is where Peter balks and seems to fall under the spell of Herod and Caesar's style of ruling, because Peter presumes to 'rebuke' Jesus, as if to say 'Oh, no Master, there will be no suffering in your rule'. But who is Peter to rebuke Jesus? And speaking of revelatory names, Jesus turns on him, and for the others too, He rebukes Peter, even calling him 'Satan' (another name-Mk 8:33) as one who opposes God - rejects or disobeys God's will for one's own desires. But, Jesus' reference 'Get behind me' is not a banishment or running off of Peter, but simply a reminder for Peter to fall back in place, in formation, in line again **behind** Jesus, because Jesus is the one leading (as if Peter was outflanking Jesus from the side, and trying to get around Jesus' hard work of loving to the point of suffering). Peter was looking for an easy way out, to avoid the work of the cross. However, this isn't the first and won't be last time that Jesus calls Peter down, and lovingly corrects and teaches Him, just what kind of Savior He is! Jesus is no Caesar. He is no Herod. This saving, suffering, servant kingship of Jesus is new – it is not expected by the apostles (which accounts for Peter's misunderstanding). But we do not want to put it all on Peter, giving only him a hard time for not understanding Jesus, Mark tells us that Jesus will teach His suffering servant leadership style on three different occasions (8:31-33, 9:30-32, 10:32-33). He will spell out that He came to suffer, be arrested-tried tortured,

even killed-before being raised-glorified. And every time, people misunderstand or ignore what He says – First it is here with Peter (Chp 8), then in chapter 9 all the apostles will fight over who is boss-the greatest right after Jesus told them He will suffer and die for His people (Jesus will put them all in their place as he lifts up a child and says ‘Here is one who is greatest in kingdom!’). And then in chapter 10, it will be the other two special leaders James & John who will get their chance to be sat down by Jesus (recall that they wanted special power-seats right and left). All three of these cases of misunderstanding about Jesus’ humble leadership style, that He leads through suffering service, is a warning to us that we should be careful too, of presuming to tell Jesus how to Lead and be our Savior, instead of simply letting Him LEAD and be for us what He knows, we need. He is the Savior, not us. As disciples, we follow. But we must know who we follow, and it takes our frequent prayer and conversation with Him, that we learn what He calls us to do: to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow-imitate Him.