

## The Glory of the Name

My hero in falconry is a man named Harry McElroy. He lives in Willcox, Arizona, and he was one of the first ones to fly Harris' Hawks back in the 70's. Today he is experimenting with Aplomado Falcons, and again is breaking new ground. He likes to publish books. He asked me several months ago for pictures of me and my hawks. I sent him several of myself and Landon, our youngest, who is also an accomplished falconer. The other day I received two new copies of his latest book, complementary due to the pictures. I have it on my bedside reading pile. You see, whatever Harry writes is worth reading, his is an ongoing ministry to me.

In today's Gospel lesson we get a glimpse of Jesus' ongoing ministry to us. In this series on the glory of the resurrected Christ we look at the glory of His presence. The reading is the beginning of an extended prayer. It has three parts that I would like to focus on today:

That we may be one as Jesus and the Father are one. As you know, I just returned from a conference on the east coast. We were in beautiful Virginia just outside of Richmond. Roslyn is a well-appointed 150 acre center for the diocese of Virginia. We were a really diverse group. We were 26 priests there representing 22 dioceses. If you include the 8 faculty we spanned the nation, from Vermont to California. Our conference leader serves a parish that was built over 400 years ago. Others serve parishes that are brand new. Some of us have been in ministry for almost 30 years, others were ordained less than 2 years ago. Theologically we were as diverse as you can possibly imagine. Yet we worked together on what we had come together to do, and never once did theology divide.

The history of the church shows with abundant clarity that theology has never proved glue enough to keep the church together, but worship and Christian service always has. The divisions in our Anglican communion today fly in the face of Jesus' prayer and grieve His heart. The answer to His prayer is for us to gather at the table in humility, to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, and serve the world in Christ's name, shoulder to shoulder in Christian charity.

That we may be protected in the Father's name. The name of the Conference is CREDO, which is the first Latin word in the Creed. It means, "I believe," but not just "I assent to the meaning of..." rather like "I believe" in the Gospel of John, it means, "I commit my life to..." When we stand and reaffirm our faith together and declare "I believe in God the Father..., and, "I believe in Jesus Christ...", and, "I believe in the Holy Spirit..." we are saying to ourselves and the world that the Father as we understand Him as Christians is the foundation of our own being, and the Son is the focus and locus of our faith, and the Holy Spirit is the motivating power in my heart. As priests at the CREDO conference, then, we took it to the next level: What do we believe to be our calling? What are our gifts and talents? Where is our passion? How are we doing spiritually, physically, professionally and economically? How can those be tweaked so that we can live into our vocations more effectively?

In the same way, when Jesus prays that we be protected in the Father's name, He is not referring to some magical formula that is going to put a lucky charm on us. He drives deeper. In a sense, it is parallel to the difference between "I accept," and "CREDO." He refers to the name of God in the old Hebrew sense, as referring not to a mere label, but to the nature and identity. We are the community whose nature and identity is to mirror that of the Father. That identity protects us from the ways of the world that is set against God. Hence, it is significant that Jesus prays for us as a community. Together we reflect the nature of the Father in a world that is in rebellion against the Father. Together we find strength to struggle with sin and we find joy in our victories. Together we find encouragement to serve that very world that rejects Jesus, just as He served us on the Cross. Protection is a community function.

That we may be empowered to move into the world. I went to CREDO feeling rather burnt out. This has been one of those years where the pace started to pick up in September of last year and just hasn't quit. I keep looking forward to a break, but the breaks just keep getting filled up. So I left for Virginia tired. At the conference I got some clarity on why I was feeling that way, I received support and creative solutions so that I can work smarter rather than harder. They gave me tools to protect me from burn-out. I return re-energized and re-focused, better equipped to serve the good people of God at St. Christopher's and in this community.

In the same way, our unity in Christ and our protection in the Father's identity have a purpose. Our unity has to do with what we do for the world. Christ was sent into the world by the Father to make the Father known. We are made one with Christ in worship and service. As Jesus made the Father known and accessible in the world, so we are sent to make the Father known and accessible in the world.

Our identity has to do with what we do for ourselves. That identity is conferred in Baptism, but the Christian life consists of learning to live into it. We learn that in the community of the faithful, here we learn, here we practice, here we get the support of the rest of the family.

I think it is significant that when Jesus prays for us He says nothing of heaven. His concern is for the here and now, how we will live the life of heaven in the midst of the earth now. It is a powerful concept, really, ultimately it is God's plan to transform the world. Therefore, the Easter Acclamation we begin the service with is in the present tense. We say, "Alleluia, the Lord IS risen, He is risen indeed, alleluia." It is the risen life of Christ present and active in our hearts and lives that makes us one, that protects us from the world, and that empowers us to serve that same world in His name.