

Thoughts on the Daily Word

20th Week of Year. Thursday 20th August. Readings: Ezekiel 36:23-28; Psalm: 50; Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14.

When I was a child, I didn't feel comfortable with my name, Michael. In the area that I grew up in it seemed very posh, which didn't go down well with the neighbourhood gang. All I wanted was to change it to something else, something more manly! It was why I took my father's name for my confirmation, 'Peter', the rock! It was not until I went to college at fifteen that I told everyone that I was called Mick or Mike, and that stuck. Names matter at some deep level, which is probably why we stuck to saint's names for so long. Even now Confirmation candidates enjoy taking saints names as their own and exploring the background. It is about who we believe we belong to and what makes us feel at home. I remember an inspiration when I first became a parish priest of telling the little children that they had to add the saints name of their school, Cuthbert, to their name, because they belonged! Some did and some didn't, naturally! God says that his name is important in Ezekiel, so important that he would rebuild Jerusalem and change people's hearts, giving them new ones. We are back to the remnant again. For us, a Christian name means that we belong to Christ. We take on his wedding garment, as at Baptism. I eventually settled for Michael when someone prayed with me to discern a vocation to the priesthood when I was 31, it took a long time. They said that God gives that name to so many of his priests because it means, 'like to God'. Maybe a good family name after all!