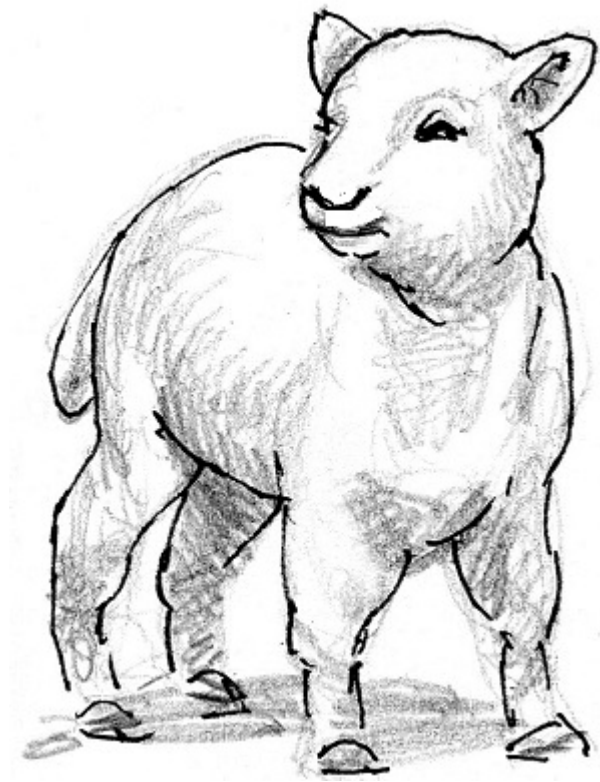


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by Pat Marrin

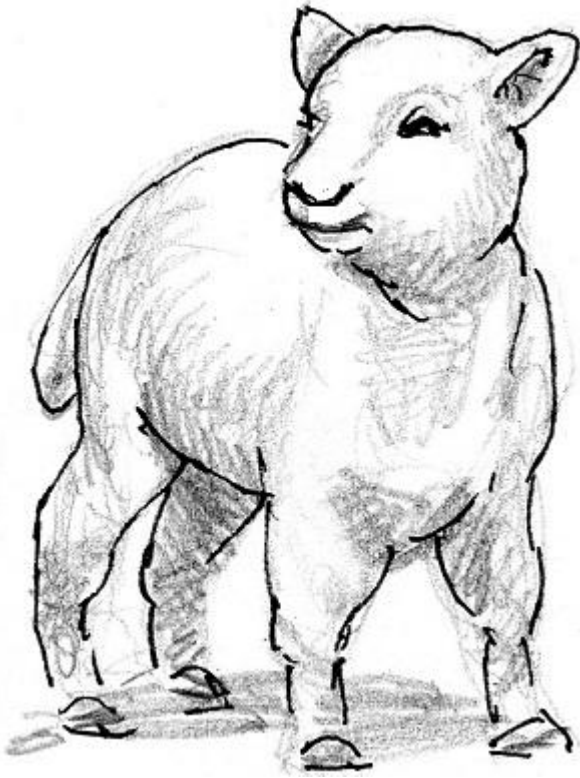
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January 2, 2020

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"I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

*1 John 2:29-3:6; John 1:29-34*

Today's liturgy commemorates the "Most Holy Name of Jesus." What's in a name? In the Bible, a name stands for the person. To know someone's name is to have access to him or her, even a kind of control. Jews refrained from uttering the name of God as an act of worship and awe for One who is totally other and beyond human knowing or controlling. *YHWH*, four Hebrew letters forming the Tetragrammaton, were not to be pronounced, nor were any images of the divinity allowed.

In Genesis, when Jacob wrestled with the mysterious being, it refused to give its name but showed its dominance by changing Jacob's name to Israel, indicating his new role as patriarch of the Chosen People. In Exodus, when Moses encounters God in the burning bush, the name he is told is I AM, or Being Itself. Names reveal power and mission. The Hebrew name *Yeshua* assigned at Jesus' birth meant "Yahweh is salvation," and later adding Christ to his title meant he was the Anointed One, or Messiah.

When Jesus called Simon, a name that meant reed, he changed it to Peter, rock, to indicate his growth from one who vacillates like a reed in the wind to someone who would be the foundation stone of the apostolic church. Every call from God

empowers us to do what we have been called for, even if we need to grow into our name, often a secret name until we activate it by living its potential. Every Christian vocation is a process of discovering who we really are.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist calls Jesus the "Lamb of God," a name that foretells his central role in the Exodus of God's people from slavery to freedom. Jesus will be sacrificed at Passover for the sins of the world. The layered richness of today's feast reminds us that the name we received at baptism, nominal and secret, contains our identity and vocations as members of the body of Christ. One prayer we as disciples are prompted to make continually is to ask God to reveal our real names, then show us how to make them come true in the way we live.

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