

## *Dreaming of Being “Smitty”*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
May 3, 2009  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

John 10:11-18, Acts 4:5-12  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Today we will be serving communion a bit differently. First you will pass by the offering bowl by design, then our Allergist will be standing there by the communion tray with a mask and rubber gloves on and handing out business cards, then a Goodnight and Snell Funeral Home director will be there with business cards for funeral arrangements just in case communion and the Allergist do not work out so well, then lastly you will file by an attorney in our congregation who can probate your estate and will and can also sue the doctor if he is not successful in treating you back to health. ll. H1N1 flu has our attention.

No, I did not call it the swine flu. Coming from farming areas I am aware that the swine farmers are really upset about the name “swine flu.” It is their living. Pork pays their bills. What we call something is important. To call a bug H1N1 flu is very different than calling it the Swine Flu. The name greatly impacts things and families and farmers.

Names are important. Labels and names are shoes to fill. Often we receive names and titles long before we are ready to fill the name. Often we have to grow into the name. Doctor. Attorney. Librarian. Mrs. Reverend. Daddy. Mommy. Son. Professor. I saw a sign this week that read “There is no such thing as a non-working mother.” So true.

Names. What names have you dreamed of having in life? Simon called Peter failed miserably at being a loyal friend to Christ and to his group of 12 Disciples when at the cross he ran away, claiming he did not even know the guy or the group. All of us have failed miserably at some point in our most treasured relationships. We fail in marriage, in parenting, in our jobs, in our church, and we run away, denying our name. We wish for another chance to live up to our name.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade I was living at my grandparent’s house after my parents divorced. I was so excited to be allowed to go with a neighbor to see him coach the high school baseball team. I had only heard of baseball on the radio. Grandpa and I would sit and listen to a few innings of baseball on the static radio station after finishing a day of working on the farm in the summer. We never talked much. Just strain to listen to the game. Grandpa told me once he had been a catcher when he was a little boy. I could not picture him ever being a little boy but I loved it when he played catch with me while we listened to the mighty Cincinnati Reds baseball team on the radio.

So I went to with my neighbor to see my first live baseball game. High school game. One guy hit a home run and everybody stood and yelled “Way to go, Smitty.” They chanted “Smitty, Smitty, Smitty” and I loved it all. I thought it would be so cool to have a nickname like Smitty and to hit a ball as far as Smitty.

I dreamed of having a new name. That game and his being called Smitty gave me big dreams.

Names. Widower. Retired. Veteran. My dad was a milkman and he had the name "Smitty" on his shirt. I always thought that was neat to have a name like Smitty on your shirt.

I had so much fun seeing the names that you selected for the back of your softball shirt this year. Bert the Allergist chose Sneezy. Pam likes her given name Pamela. Jasper Kid was what Janice chose...her father was in Jasper, Indiana on a business trip when the police found him and told him to get back home to the hospital because he was about to become a daddy. Janice was born and has been called the Jasper Kid ever since.

Gaye is St. Gaye. Clayton is Clutch. Tommy is Double Clutch. Always comes through in the clutch.

At age 56 I like to be called Intelligent. Smart. Seasoned. Smitty is a fun name but Reverend is a dignified name.

Reverend Smith, Judge Brenda, and Teacher Pamela went and visited new Parents Parker and Jennifer and New Baby Cris Krantz yesterday in Austin. Brenda drove her new Mercury SUV. Nice car. Hospital visit went well. I gave the Parker family three hand-made wooden pocket crosses. One was mine, one was Brenda's, and one was Pamela's. I forgot to bring the newly-made crosses from home. So Brenda, Pamela, and I gave up our own crosses to give Jennifer her hard-earned crosses!

We went back to the hospital parking lot to get into the new Mercury SUV. Brenda decided to fix the back door latch and to disengage the Child Proof lock so that I could get in and out of the new car by myself. Problem soon developed. The door locked while we had it open and then we could not shut the door. It would not shut due to the Child Proof lock being closed, thus preventing the door from shutting.

So we drove through downtown Austin with the door open, window down, and me with my arm out the open window holding the door. As Daniel later said, we were keeping Austin weird, as the bumper sticker says.

At a stop light, a police rescue truck pulled up beside me. I looked at the officer and he looked at me and my arm. He said, "Do you know your door is open?" I really did not know what to say. I am on probation and serving community service time for an open speeding ticket so I really did not want to risk opening my mouth in this situation. But before I could speak he figured it out and answered his own question. He said wryly, "That is why your arm is out the window, isn't it? You are holding the door." I nodded. Brenda yelled out to him, "Do you have any duct tape?" He said, "No" and he drove away. Brenda said, "What good is a Rescue car with no duct tape?"

Pam said the officer was cute. At every stoplight people asked the same question, "Do you know your door is open?" I waved to them with my left arm and smiled, keeping the door closed with my right arm.

We drove to a Pontiac dealer to ask for their assistance. The guy said, "It is not a Pontiac. We can not help you." That may be why Pontiac is now history.

We drove to the Ford dealer. Carefully. Turns are hard when your door flies open. The Ford Service manager took his knife and prodded the locking mechanism. At the same time, he pulled the outside handle on my door. The lock popped open and the door could shut. I asked him what he did with his knife.

He said, "Nothing. I just pulled the door handle and the latch opened." None of us had done the obvious. None of us had tried to pull the door handle.

Now we know why Ford is still in business.

It is the simple things in life. Pam says this is a Good Samaritan story. She was surprised at how many people were concerned that our door was open. Brenda was relieved when I told her that this story would stay in the car and that it would never make a sermon. Daniel said it is too good of a story to not preach.

Don allowed me to help him make wooden pocket crosses this week. He is the master. I made 29 crosses. His crosses look better than mine. But he let me try. I had fun. And he trusted me enough to allow me to use his shop and his power tools as he guided me.

Peter failed miserably at the cross but now Peter is preaching a sermon of Love. He has a new name. Simon called Peter. A new sense of purpose. A new Hope. New Life. As Pinky says, "You can *feel* it."

God created us and allows us to work on our own lives and to try and figure things out for ourselves. When we run into trouble we can go to God and ask for some Guidance when we can not get things to work right in our lives. God designed and created the doors in our lives. Sometimes it is just a simple thing like pulling the door handle open to allow God's love into our lives. We complicate it. God simplifies it all. Just love. Just laugh. Just go to church. Just cry a bit. Just take communion. Just try. Letting God into your lives is allowing the Expert of Love into your world and into your family.

Christian. A follower of the teachings of Christ. Nice name. I dream of being worthy of that name someday. Amen.