

## FEBRUARY 29

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*The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.—John 10:3-5*

The closest thing to the realm of God I have ever experienced is the Magdalene community begun in Nashville, Tennessee, by Becca Stevens. Women who have endured lives of prostitution, violence, and abuse find a sisterhood of recovery that takes them from the deepest poverty to the richest abundance of life.

The women of Magdalene are my spiritual guides. And they have names—names like Shana and Shelia and Katrina and Ronza and Melody and Melanie. When they see me, they call me by name, and when I see them, I call them by name.

The sisterhood of Magdalene is not just a two-year residential recovery program. It is a promise of hope rooted in the principle that each woman is not a statistic but a whole person with a sacred name, a sacred face, a sacred story.

As long as we are trying to end homelessness without attaching faces and names, we will never end homelessness.

As long as we are trying to end poverty and don't make it personal, we will never end poverty.

As long as we are trying to end hunger and refuse to meet hungry people face to face, we will never end hunger.

Because we will never care enough, unless we see ourselves— unless we see Jesus’ face on the faces of the people who are suffering.

As long as we view the deep brokennesses of our world as “problems” and the people as statistics, we will never care enough to get the job done.

Jesus gives us the model of the Good Shepherd—and the Good Shepherd calls each of the sheep *by name*. That’s our model. Our hearts are not strangely warmed by statistics, but we are moved by images of God with names.

The deep truth behind welcoming the stranger is that the very act of welcoming makes the person not a stranger. And the first act of welcoming is the most powerful—sharing names. When we share names, we become human to each other. And that is the beginning of activating the healing power of love.

—MIKE KINMAN