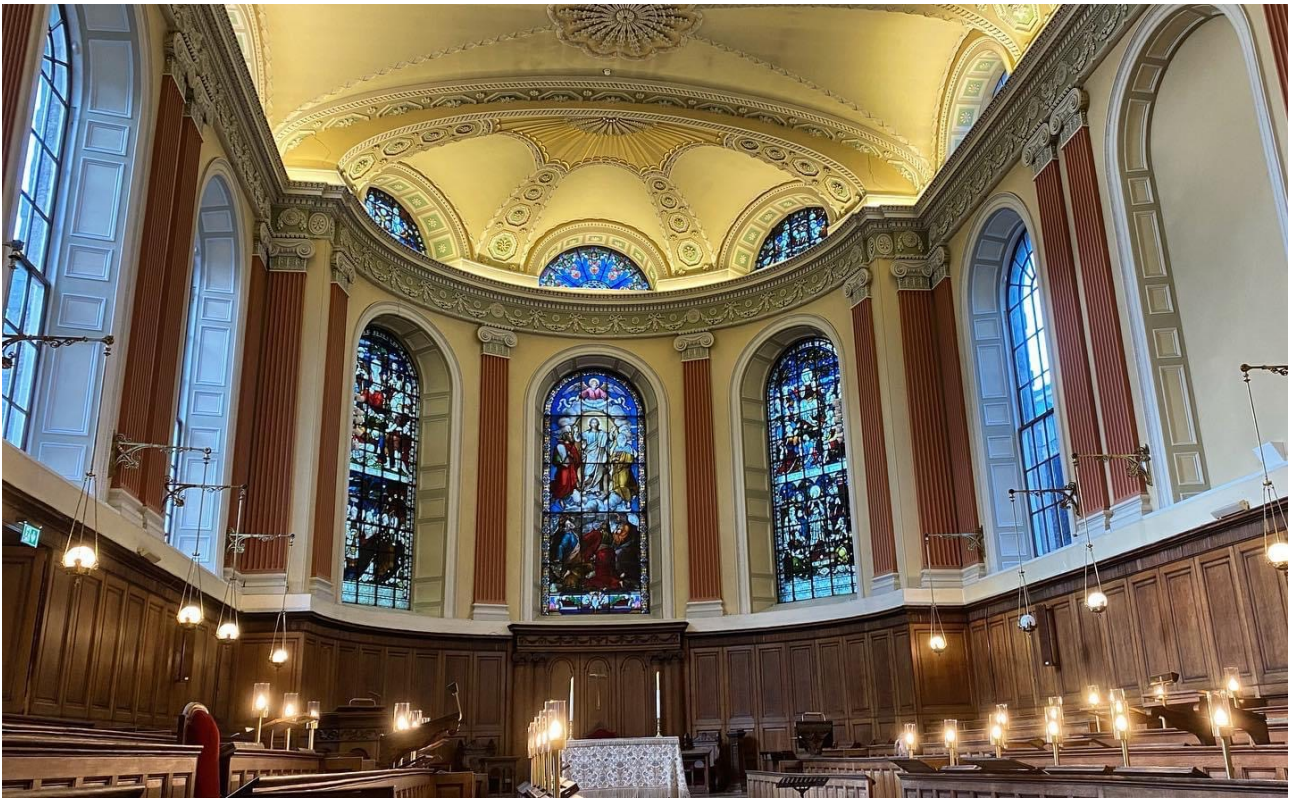# Speaking to the soul

Named

And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

Naming a child is a huge moment for parents. If you have ever had that privilege, I am sure you will remember the conversations about the various possibilities. You might have considered names that were particularly important in your family, or names that you simply liked. But, knowing

that the child will carry that name for life, you will have given it careful consideration.

We have three children, and I remember the long discussions about various names well! Our third child is called Bethany, the name of the place where my wife and I first met. I was leading a student group on a trip around Israel, where we stayed in a cheap hotel on the West Bank near Bethany. My future wife was one of the students! Many have since asked us what we'd have called her if we had met in Bognor Regis or Market Harborough…and I guess the answer is probably Bethany!

Jesus was given his name because that's what the angel commanded. It was a very common name and has the same root as Joshua, meaning 'God saves'. From the very beginning of his life, it was clear that Jesus had a special mission to the world. There is no doubt that Mary was fully aware that she was bearing a very special son after her meeting with Gabriel. But I would so love to know what kind of conversations Joseph and Mary had about Jesus. It must have been a lot for this young couple to cope with - and they handled the situation with such grace and calmness.

Jesus would become an inspiring teacher and a miraculous healer but, before anything else, he came to be the saviour of the world. His unique identity as fully man and fully God enabled him to do what no one else could ever do. He set humankind free from their sins.

QUESTION
How important is your own name to you?

PRAYER
Loving Father, thank you for sending your son into the world to save us from our sins. Amen

Photograph - The Chapel Trinity College, Dublin