

REFLECTION
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
FEBRUARY 27, 2016

First Reading – Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

I have decided to reflect on the first reading for tomorrow – the story of Moses from Exodus. I will defer to Leroy to reflect on the Gospel at tomorrow’s liturgy.

I find it interesting that Moses was going about his usual business – tending the flock – when he received his very unexpected call from God. Shepherding -- A rather lonely, somewhat boring task of spending the whole day watching the sheep, without anyone to talk to, no one to share his concerns or observations with. Just keeping an eye on each of the animals to make sure none of them strayed. If we were to rank this job among those “most desired” in the society – it would probably come close to the bottom.

SO -- what a surprise when the angel appeared in his midst to pose the important question. Even more than the request must have been what he saw behind the voice. What was this phenomenon of a bush that was burning but not consumed. It certainly was enough to gain Moses’ total attention to listen to the daunting invitation – will you accept the call to come to the rescue of your suffering people, your friends and neighbors, who are being persecuted by these Egyptians? God told the frightened and bewildered shepherd that he had been chosen for this awesome task of showing the path to freedom for those who had been enslaved for many decades.

Can we put ourselves in Moses’ shoes? I am sure that our reaction would have been very similar. Why me? I’m not strong enough, not important enough, not

talented enough to do this critical task that you are laying before me. No one will listen to me. There are so many others who can do it better. Go ask them.

In fact, if we remember, that was exactly the reaction of Moses. He even suggested that God could choose a more appropriate ambassador – his own brother Aaron. And he gave the reason why Aaron could do it more effectively – he had the gift of speech, he didn't stutter or get all flustered when he had to speak. He could represent the Holy One so much better. But – are we surprised!!! -- God was not interested in his excuses, or his alternate suggestions. God was asking Moses to make himself available for this role of leader, of mentor, of teacher, of companion – all of which would be necessary to follow the calling for which he was being invited.

Fortunately, for us and all of Yahweh's people, we know that Moses did accept the invitation, even with his own very real fear and concern that he would not be able to do an adequate job. Instead of declining and deferring – he simply then posed the most crucial question – How can I convince the people that you have entrusted me with this awesome responsibility? How will others know that I am not an imposter, or someone who is out for his own glory or fame? How will others know that I am not part of some crazy scheme that will in the long run be harmful to them. God's answer – Tell them my name "I am Who Am". Just simply that – tell them that I, God, The One Who Is, has sent you. Implied in that response is the fact that, even before Moses could tell others that Yahweh was sending him – he first had to believe it himself. God would be the source of his power and strength. That was all he needed.

What does Moses' story have to do with us? – EVERYTHING, AND everything.

While we may not often make the comparison – we, too, receive an invitation from God – to extend ourselves in love and caring to others in need. While it may not be as dramatic as the burning bush that drew Moses, it is, nevertheless, an authentic call from God. It may be in active ministry – which sometimes allows us to recognize the call more easily – in the words and suffering of the

sick or elderly, in the guidance needed by confused students, in the desperation felt by the homeless, in the ongoing concerns of the parishioners. But it also comes to us daily in our lives in community – in the patience we need with people we find irritating, in the aches and pains we experience that prevent us from being as physically active as we would like, in the extra assistance our sisters need from us, and also in the demands on our time to “fill in the spaces” that enable all of us to live more peacefully with one another. Certainly, we can have the same reticence and hesitation that Moses felt. We would like to suggest that God choose someone else, that maybe we could be left alone for a little while. But, no, God persists – continues to invite and encourage us to extend ourselves beyond our comfort level and to be open to the new commitments ----- . The call is there – for each of us – and God is waiting for our answer. But Yahweh also extends the same love and mercy given to Moses. We also know the lasting support, the ongoing love that comes with our acceptance of our God whose Name is I AM – with you, in you and for you – I AM. Come, be my face in this world today.

S. Michelle Farabaugh, OSB