

Moses asked God in essence, “what is your name? What shall I say to the Israelites when they ask me your name?” To Moses God responded, “I AM WHO I AM.” I wonder how God’s answer would have initially set with Moses—one being called to do something larger than Moses thought he could do or ever imagined. I wonder what “I AM WHO I AM” now means to you as you hear these words uttered on this third Sunday in Lent. God gave a more definitive answer at the end of today’s dialogue: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’” (Ex 3:15). This story of Moses is central to the faith of our Jewish sisters and brothers. It’s central to our faith as Christians and still speaks loudly to us these many centuries later. It poses to important questions for us today. What is God calling you to do or to be? How do you address the One who says, “I AM WHO I AM?”

Moses was now a somewhat ordinary man tending his father-in-law’s sheep. He had settled in the land of Midian with his family, and he had some kind of livelihood. He had fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian who had beaten a Hebrew. Moses witnessed the beating of one of his own kind and responded by killing the Egyptian. Then he fled the land, fearing that someone would tell Pharaoh of his action. When he came to Midian, he helped the daughters of a man named Reuel water their flock one day and was invited to break bread with them. He agreed to stay with Reuel for a time, and Reuel eventually gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. They had a son named Gershom, named because Moses said, “I have been an alien residing in a foreign land.” (Ex 2:22). After some years the king of Egypt died, and the Israelites were still enslaved. God heard the cries of the Israelites and remembered the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. (Ex 2:24). Hence God enters into this conversation with Moses that we hear today.

Moses had led the flock he tended beyond the wilderness to Mount Horeb where he had this divine encounter with God. He was fascinated with this bush that kept on burning and was not consumed by the fire. He wanted a closer look, but God said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place in which you are standing is holy ground.” (Ex 3:5). God revealed God’s self to Moses, and Moses hid his face—afraid to look at God. No one could look at God and live.

I remember a homeless man who came to the Cathedral for a time. He was faithful and accepted by Cathedral members. When he came to communion, he removed his shoes. He was acknowledging the holy ground in which he was standing as he received that holy meal, breaking bread with Cathedral folks.

How is God known to us? God was revealed to Moses in this burning bush—an intriguing sight and yet a sight of fear. Moses hides his face and still enters into a conversation with God—a conversation expressing his unworthiness and inadequacy: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Ex 3:11).

Most of the Old Testament stories of call reveal people who resist God’s call in some way. Gideon responded to God when asked to deliver Israel from the hand of Midian: “But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” (Judges 6:15). Isaiah said in his call, “Who is me! I am least, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5). Jeremiah responded, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” (Jer 1:6). They all expressed their unworthiness just as Moses. To act on behalf of God was an awesome responsibility. Each of these called was reassured by God that God would be with them. Most important of all is that God

was going the work through the humans called. In Moses' call it was God who would bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, and God needed Moses to lead them. To each concern Moses expressed, God gave reassurance.

As we wander through the desert of Lent, Moses' call reminds us that we, too, are called by God. Moses' call also reminds us that God invites us to question and gives us choices in life. We choose to answer a call or to resist. We still have time to wander and to wonder about God's call for us at this particular time.

I invite you into a time of silence to ponder what God is calling you to do or to be right now. To the One who says, "I AM WHO I AM," how do you respond. What do you call this God who calls you into being?

We heard in the Gospel that Jesus calls us all to be fruitful. To what do you feel called at this time by the One who says, "I AM WHO I AM?"