

March 4, 2018 – Cum Sancto Spiritu
By Wayne J. Schneider

Is It Fascination or Faith? Exodus 3:1-15

One of the delightful characteristics of young children, is that they live ‘in the moment’ with absolute openness. Each new discovery is breathtaking. Upon seeing a field of multicolored tulips for the first time, a five-year-old was heard uttering, “*God wonders me.*’ May the same be said of you? Are you surprised by God?

Moses is an escapee from Egypt in the thirteenth century BCE. But do not feel pity for old Moe, because he has done quite well for himself, thank you! He is married, and has been added to the retirement plan of a wealthy sheik. Moses is comfortable and somewhat fulfilled in his life of simplicity.

“Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.” I am intrigued with the verb “led.” “[Moses] led his flock beyond the wilderness.” He guides his flock far into the desert and that steers him to the mountain of God. This is not simply wandering, searching for water or food for his sheep. He is a hunting for connection, for mystery, for wonderment.

You and I make a connection with music, and art, and breathtaking views because, like the Abraham who wanders in our heads, awe roams around in our souls. Heart-to-heart romance stirs us; it is what the Knights of the Round Table were searching for. And worshiping God uplifts us.

“Moses led his flock to the far side of the desert.” He is distracted. Then, he discovers something extraordinary on the mountain and is mesmerized by it. Can you visualize it? He sees a bush that burns but is not consumed. There is fire, heat, smoke, but not ashes.

You and I do this ‘far-side-of-the-mountain’ thing regularly. We take a weekend off, a vacation, we sleep-in. Or we ‘veg-out!’ Or, we come to church. We

ache for stillness and quiet. We 'zone-out' with a CD, or go to our backyards where the flowers are (or will soon be) blooming. Or, we sit on a bench and watch the birds feast at our bird feeders. We are gratifyingly, powerfully distracted. But why? Is it because all of us, like Moses, are searching for something?

Moses hears a Voice, the same Voice that created the cosmos out of chaos: that calls out to Adam in the Garden; that made Sarah laugh and Abraham believe. The Voice says, "*Moses, Moses! . . . 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'*"

This is the point at which OUR search for God often ceases. It usually happens when a crisis of faith becomes a turning point, a fork in the road. Like Moses, we drift close to God, but when the Voice speaks, and asks us to "*Take off our sandals,*" too often we stroll away. Why we do dat? Do the sandals represent something in our lives?

Could it be that the sandals represent our ego, or the security we have made in our own image? Is it possible that it is the things we place in our lives to keep us at a comfortable or a controllable, distance from God? Perhaps *removing our sandals* leaves us uneasily vulnerable before God. "*Moses, take off your sandals.*"

Jesus said it this way: "*Unless you become as a little child, you cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God.*" Why do we need to take our sandals off? Perhaps by removing our sandals we become 'naked before God, as a newborn child: exposed and dependent. "*Moses, take off your sandals.*"

Barefoot on holy ground certainly means more than sand between your toes. Is our search for God simply curiosity, or does it unearth our need for conversion? When the Voice asks, "*Take off your sandals,*" do we walk away, sandals on our feet, afraid of the openness necessary before God? *Is it fascination or faith?* Our culture is fascinated with spirituality; it has become a buzzword in cinema, literature, politics, and economics.

Each of us is called from the far side of the desert to a life-transforming

experience: to be exposed, to be defenseless, to be real like the “Velveteen Rabbit,” before God. To be barefoot on Holy Ground is to encounter God deeply.

It may be that we are here this morning, tired from wandering in the desert. We might be as parched inside as a desert is outside. God is waiting to open the flood gates and release the “*Living water,*” if we will but *take off our sandals, and let ‘God wonder us.’* Wouldn’t you rather be swimming? Alleluia. Amen.