

Dcn. Jerry's Homily for the Third Sunday of Lent, March 20, 2022

In today's environment we need to have situational awareness about war, inflation, disease, polarization in the country and many other issues. Sometimes we try to rationalize why we do not need to consider an issue. For example, when I was in eighth grade I began caddying and on one of the first days, I was proud I had earned a five dollar bill. As I was leaving the country club I saw some older caddies, guys who liked to gamble and bully but not work, robbing another guy a couple of hundred yards in front of me. I could have turned around and taken a much longer route home to be safe, but instead I tried to rationalize why this guy, who I judged as being even nerdier than me, would get robbed and I would not and I kept walking towards these much older, much larger and much tougher guys. Guess what, I got robbed. Not good situational awareness.

But as I was being robbed, I salvaged the situation to some extent. Knowing these guys probably came from difficult families, I convinced them that I was in a similar situation and to give me three dollars in change. Which they did. Sometimes when we are under the gun we can adapt to the situation and show greater awareness. But that has the risk of us believing that we are still in control.

Moses was different. He was raised as a prince of Egypt and when he saw an Egyptian strike a Hebrew slave he struck and killed the Egyptian overlord. Not good situational awareness, not a good way to free his people. Angry and impatient. He saw injustice but in the end did not accomplish anything. He escaped and was leading what was probably a good life for the day as the son-in-law of Jethro, a nomad chief. But there was this anomaly, this burning bush and Moses was curious.

God is hidden in the burning bush. He showed himself to Moses, just as he shows himself to us in so many ways, often little ways, often hidden ways; the smile of a child or a good turn done for a stranger. Sometimes we think we would like to see the face of God. Are we really prepared? There is an event later in Exodus, during the journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land, where God hides Moses in the crevice of a rock and lets him see His back as God passes by. To see the face of God would be too awesome for any of us. And yet here He is. The image of the Second Person of the Trinity on the cross.

God tells Moses to take off his sandals because he is on sacred ground. In a few moments most of us will receive the Eucharist. Are we aware of the situation we are in? At this Mass, Jesus is present in four ways; He is present in the congregation, He is present in His sacred Word, He is present in the Eucharist, and He is even present in the priest who might have a strange resemblance to Richard Dreyfus. We should be awestruck.

Moses risked his life earlier by killing the Egyptian to protect the Hebrew slave. He had given up his princely life because he acted in haste and anger. He ignored the consequences of acting the way he did in his situation. It may be that God used his mistakes to put Moses in the proper physical, and more importantly mental and spiritual position, to be God's instrument. In the quiet times with the flock on Mount Horeb, did Moses know he needed divine help? He was just a shepherd – how could he rescue his people?

Moses was in awe of God's presence; he was afraid but there was something more. Before he asks for God's name, God says that He is the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. Superficially we might say that God is just announcing that I am the Jewish God, the God of your forefathers. But God is saying much more. He had a personal

relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He told them that they would become a great nation and that all the nations would take blessing through their descendants.

God told Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would bless all nations through their descendants and now He tells Moses that I am that God. I am the God that will send the Messiah. We know that the Messiah would break the chains of sin and death, but that knowledge comes through Christ. God says you, Moses, will be the instrument to free my people. And although you do not know this, you will be the Type of how my son will rescue people from sin.

Moses was cut off from his people because he had killed an Egyptian. He could not help them on his own and now God is commanding him to return to Egypt and to be the instrument that God uses to free his people. Moses is unsure of himself and asks God his name. I AM WHO AM. God is. Go always was. God always will be. God is a constant. In one sense God is immovable. When we sin we move away from Him but He never moves away from us.

Sometimes we use the term 'covenant' to describe our relationship with God, or rather His relationship with us. He never swerves from His word; even when we break our word with God by sinning, He is always constant. I AM WHO AM. A covenant is not a contract. If one party breaches a contract the other party is released from their obligation in the contract. But a covenant is different. God is always constant. He is always true to His covenant with us. He always loves us no matter how we fail or how we fall.

People see the God of the Old Testament as cruel and harsh. I see a God who was always willing to forgive when people were willing to return to Him. We can sin and be forgiven. It happens over and over. Whether it is Cain or David or the series of failed kings that followed Solomon, God shows mercy when people change. Moses was given a command. Go and rescue my people. If you are incapable of convincing Pharaoh, do not worry I will provide the signs that will free my people.

I AM WHO AM. I do not bend to your sinful ways but if you follow my ways I will give you great blessings. If our goal is heaven then we should be aware of any situations that prevent us from getting there and any situations that help us to get there.

At best I seem to take two steps forward and one back. I do not have good situational awareness. I get distracted by all the situations in the world when I should focus on what will help me get to heaven.

This coming Monday at 7 pm we have an opportunity to take a step forward at the communal penance service. Have faith. God is good. He will forgive us for those backward steps we take.

Remember I AM WHO AM. He is constant. His love is constant for us. All He asks is that if we have sinned to say I am sorry and turn our hearts to Him.

Dcn. Jerry