March 17, 2017  
Second Sunday of Lent  
Gn 15:5-12, 17-18; Phil 3:17—4:1 or Phil 3:20—4:1; Lk 9:28b-36  

Br. Steve Herro, O. Praem.  

As we continue our trek through Lent 2019, we experience the transfiguration of Jesus with his disciples Peter, James, and John. Luke presents another theophany, this one on the mountain in which Moses and Elijah, symbolizing the great Jewish liberator and leader to the Promised Land (Moses) and perhaps the greatest prophet of Old Testament history (Elijah), are revealed with Jesus. 

The disciple witnesses are not quite sure how to respond. First, Luke writes that Peter spoke out almost too late, as Moses and Elijah were about to depart. Second, Luke comments that Peter “did not know what he was saying.” Third, the disciples became “frightened” when they entered the cloud. Fourth, Luke concludes that the disciples “… fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.” I cannot help but notice the four times that the disciples are presented as not being especially on top of things.  

Church ministers, ordained and lay, have many unique opportunities to discover the presence of God in our lives. How do homilists and other ministers react to their encountering of the holy? Are we any wiser, any more effective than the disciples, in sharing our experiences of God?  

I live with a number of Norbertines who serve college students as teachers, campus ministers, college administrators, and vocation directors. I once heard one of the Norbertines describe a student who was living in poverty. It was hard for me to envision a young adult in poverty who was enrolled at an upper middle class-upper class liberal arts college where courses, housing, and food are provided, once you have paid your bill or redeemed your scholarship and grants. I was naïve of the existence of struggling college students. When alerted to someone suffering from poverty in unsuspecting circumstances, how do we respond? Are we any more enlightened than the disciples were in today’s Gospel?  

I imagine that most of us, and many that we preach to, have done a mission/service/immersion trip to a less endowed sister parish, low income reservation, struggling inner city, or country within the developing world. If so, we have experienced the face of God in the lives of poor people. Having been privileged to receive such insights, how has it affected our preaching, praying, teaching, writing, voting, and simple daily interacting? Are we any more observant in responding to this experience of the holy than the disciples were? Have we become greater advocates for those suffering from economic deprivation as a result of our mission/service/immersion trips?  

Many Church ministers spend a lot of time with those suffering physical ailments. We visit shut ins in their homes, patients in hospitals, and grieving family and friends in funeral homes and churches. During these visits, it is very possible that the patient suffers, physically and or emotionally, from worries about affordable health care. We experience the presence of God in a suffering patient. I once tended to someone who had a medical emergency while several of us were exercising but declined to be transported to an emergency room, probably because she was not sure how she would pay for it. How did this glimpse of the holy, an encounter with a worrying adult
without affordable health care, impact my understanding of our country’s crisis in access to health care? Was I any wiser in responding than the disciples were after Jesus was transfigured?

There are many opportunities for us to respond to the presence of God in our regular encounters, often surrounded by circumstances of social justice. May we be more sensitive to these theophanies and capable to respond in more just and peace seeking manners.

Steve is a brother of St. Norbert Abbey, De Pere, Wisconsin. He blogs at stevenherro.wordpress.com, helps manage a community think tank in greater Green Bay, and serves the Diocese of Green Bay as an archivist. He is also a participant in the Franciscan Center for Spirituality’s Spiritual Direction Preparation Program.