

There have been times I've prayed for God to speak to me as clearly as he does to people in the Bible like Moses. If He can't get a bush burning in the Midwest, I'd take a tall pile of snow. Or maybe a large spring puddle. If those are too ordinary, how about a burning corn stalk, or a pillar of brush fire smoke? But no, my messages from God aren't that clear. I have to muddle around waiting for something to sink into my consciousness.

But I also wonder what my response to God might be if I got a message spoken as clearly as if he were beside me. I do know I'd be a lot like Moses then. Or Noah. Or Jeremiah, or any other number of people God asks to do his work. They all say they aren't the right fit. They are not eloquent. They are too old. They aren't the right race. I would probably say I don't have the right connections, or enough resources. They may be more modern answers, but really, it's the same response.

I've had this happen recently. God asked me to consider becoming an ordained deacon. I didn't think it was the best idea, and I had to have a lot of people convince me it was worth exploring before I was willing. I kept listening for God's voice, and when it finally sunk in that I needed to do more work, but not be a deacon, it still was still more like groping around for something small in an unfamiliar dark room than seeing something as bright as a burning bush. Let alone one that talked.

The most recent item to come up in my prayers and listening has been the Hispanic Ministry Fr. Charlie brought up at the Annual meeting in January. Now, being someone who has been in discernment and says she is loving towards God's people, and my family at Trinity, you might assume that I was overjoyed at the idea of starting this work here.

It's a nice assumption, but it's not the attitude I had. At first I was skeptical, and since I don't think well silently in my own head, I brought the idea up with some small groups of people so we could talk about it, and I could firm up what I was thinking. The groups I spoke to ranged from skepticism to defensiveness, and we all had a lot of questions. Who would run the service? Our priest doesn't speak Spanish. If we have another priest come in and do the service, would we have to pay him? Fr. Charlie said a priest would volunteer at first. What about other costs? Wine and bread, bulletins, prayerbooks, musicians? And how would these new folks blend in with the rest of the congregation? And what happens if there get to be so many Spanish speakers that the current congregation gets squished out? What then???

It might seem that we jumped to some apocalyptic thinking, but the *UNKNOWN* can do that. We don't know all that might happen. It could be that we'd give it a shot, and it would fizzle. So a meeting was arranged in February for members of Trinity and St. David's to meet with Rev. Pedro Lopez and Bishop Scantlebury about starting a Hispanic ministry. We asked questions about how this might work, what the costs might be, and were told about what a church in Elgin is like since starting a Spanish service. Their one Spanish service grew to two services, and now the Hispanic community is larger than the original congregation, but no one has been squished out. We also learned that growing the church like had had grown the budget some, but it didn't solve all their financial issues. The vibe the Trinity folks had leaving that meeting was not positive. Some of us were skeptical that doing this work would sink our foundering financial ship, that we don't have the resources, that there isn't the people-power to pull it off.

After the February meeting, I spoke to some more people that I hadn't before. I didn't get a lot of positive feedback about the idea of moving forward. Only one person said she might be interested, and then only in attending a service, not in helping getting things going. When the issue came up at our last vestry meeting in February, I retold the conversations I had had with people. It was obvious Fr. Charlie was disappointed, and he said he'd heard some very positive feedback from folks. Then Rob brought something forward.

Rob pointed out that Jesus called his followers to open their doors to people who didn't speak their language. He called them to minister to the strangers in their land. Paul went to people who weren't Jews and called them into the circle of Christ's love. Again and again in the Bible, God has His chosen leaders go to the people who are in the most need and who happen to be outsiders to the original community of God's people. Rob also said that we need to move forward with our hearts, trusting in God, not letting our rational brains take over.

I went home with Rob's words running through my head. And I thought about one of the readings the Bible Study Group discussed in January: God calling Moses to serve His people. Moses was an outsider since he had been raised by the Egyptians, even though his genetics tied him to the enslaved Jews. We've had a lot of readings from Paul's letters, and we've talked about Paul serving Gentiles, people who weren't Jews. Before I went to bed after that vestry meeting, I prayed to God to open my heart and get me out of my head and its doubts.

I got up in the morning and had thoughts about others in the Bible we've been reading about saying, "No," to God because they thought they didn't have the right skills. God said to Jeremiah, "Do not say to me, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you." Isn't that what's happening here? I am telling God, "No, we don't have the resources for this new project," without trusting that if we move onto that path, He will provide what we need. By this time, I was driving to work, and said to God, "Okay, I'm getting it."

My first task at work that morning was to observe and write up an evaluation on a part-time teacher at a satellite campus of my college. The class had read an article titled "The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong" by Bill McKibben and they were talking about his points about Christian hypocrisy. The teacher also showed a PBS video about an Episcopal family and their church, and the work the church and family did to fulfill God's calling to them to act as Christ would. The class had a discussion about the hypocrisy of some "believers," and how this family seemed to truly embody the idea of being a Christian. They also talked about the idea that people might do this work for personal gain in the afterlife, but that idea notwithstanding, they seemed to truly act as Christians.

I left the campus to go teach my own classes at the main campus. As I was driving, I thought about Rob's words, about the Bible lessons, and about the video and class discussion I had heard. Wasn't my own action pretty hypocritical? I claim to want to do God's work in the world, and I've even explored being a deacon, and still listen for that call. But here I was turning my back on God's people because of the possibilities it could be harmful to Trinity, and of the work I might have to do to help. I found myself saying to God, "Okay, okay! I get it! I'll change!"

But I also heard God telling me something else. It's not enough to change my mind. As a leader at Trinity, I am called to change the minds of others. I'm challenging you to open your hearts and minds and give this a chance. The last thing I heard God telling me is that support doesn't mean that I have to do all the work. There are people who want this and who want to work at it. It's enough at this time that I support them with prayers and a positive attitude. There might be a time when more is asked of me, but right now, this is what I need to do.

Trinity needs you to do this as well. I've asked Fr. Charlie to include the possibility of Hispanic Ministry in our weekly parish prayers so it's in our minds and hearts each Sunday. I ask you to keep it in your prayers each day. And as you have questions and concerns, bring them forward. Let's talk about them. And if you find God calling to you to help in some way, even if you don't speak Spanish, come forward. Rob asked the Vestry to think with our hearts. I ask all of us to do that as well.

Dear Lord, be with us as we make our forward over whatever path you are setting before us. We cannot see where you are leading us. We cannot know where the path will bring us, or where it will turn or twist. Give us eyes in our hearts that we may see clearly without our human eyes. Give us hearts that are strong to keep going even we feel like we might fall. Give us ears in our hearts to hear your call to us. Help us be silent in listening for your words to us. Open us, that we may overflow with your love, and fill the hearts of others.