

Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, after the powerful encounter with God, and his face shown. He had been marked by the encounter. Jesus came down from the mountain, with Peter, James, and John, and set his face towards Jerusalem, where, he told them, he would be tortured, and killed.

Men and women, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God. Acted for God. Lead us to God. It doesn't stop. The mountaintop is the metaphor for the place where we go apart to seek and receive the visitations of God.

For Florence Nightingale, it came several times. As a 17 year old, when she didn't know specifically what it meant for her life, and later at age 31, in Germany where she went to a catholic hospital with the most scientifically based training for nursing care at the time, and she knew that God wanted her to transform the practice of nursing to save lives and alleviate suffering. Florence Nightingale made nursing a respected profession with a scientific basis, and saved the lives of countless sick, poor people, and soldiers.

For Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first woman to serve as a priest in the Christian world, it came when in the midst of Japan's brutal invasion of China, when in 1944, no Anglican priests could reach Christian populations in the war-torn areas. And so Bishop Hall of Hong Kong ordained her, and she returned to the war-torn area of China. Following the war, for several years she did not formally use her priestly office, to give other bishops the opportunity to embrace the ordained ministry of women.

Then as the Communist Revolution created chaos, she was again, rector of an Anglican church in China. Later, she suffered through 16 years as a factory worker, forbidden to practice her ministry, and target of the Cultural Revolution. She treasured Jesus words, "and having loved his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end."

Men and women, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God. Acted for God. Lead us to God.

What about us? Will we seek the mountaintop of God's intense visitation and illumination of our lives? We may avoid it out of laziness. We are content with our lives. We are busy, and lack energy for risky new things.

Or fear. We are afraid of what it might cost, or require of us.

Jesus came down from the mountain steeled to go to Jerusalem, to get himself arrested and killed. Florence Nightingale knew that to achieve her goal, she would have to reject the proposals of marriage from men she loved and valued. The powerful visitation of God always has consequences.

But it is very difficult to lead a life of greater significance, of eternal hopes and impacts, unless we chose to go to the mountaintop. Going to the mountain may not be easy for us. Experience of God may be hard to understand and integrate.

So temptations are willing to help us avoid the sinais and mounts of transfiguration that lead to new morning stars being born, burning with the hot fire of the Holy Spirit of God.

Woe to us when we justify the small and tame, the petty, the low expectation, making-excuses vision. Woe to us when we run off the gas fumes of empty tanks, spending the gift and legacy of a more bold and vigorous past. We may stumble and keep our eyes fixed on our own toes to avoid the lamp beyond that beckons us.

The shining mountaintop with God gives anew to us. Puts gas in our tank, helps us discover moxy. Shapes our souls in communion with the truth, and vision, and the holiness of God, that makes the struggle to live it out possible. God's light gives us drive and passion.

Sometimes we are tempted to think some people are just oriented or by personality gifted for intense experiences of the holy, and others are not. There is some basis for this in our experience.

Some people are more high strung and visionary, the Anne of Green Gables types whose vivid imaginations and bright spirits make it easier for them to resolve to go

to the mountain, or imagine they are on it already. For them, it is the learning to carry it out that is the harder task.

But as my clergy friend in Pacific Grove used to say to his children, when they said they didn't feel like taking out the garbage, just then, you don't have to want to, you just have to have to; so go. In other words, in the Christian witness, it isn't their natural proclivity, or the availability of God to anyone being thoughtful that gets us where we need to go.

Instead, choosing to go to the mountaintop, seeking God's illumination, any of us may become eyewitnesses to the majesty and holiness and direction of God. In the words of the psalm, we can proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God, and fall down before his footstool, to worship God upon his holy hill. Then we do not follow merely the testimony of others. We ourselves know the Lord who is mighty, a lover of justice, the friend of the oppressed, and the outcaste.

Our epistle urges us, you would be well to be attentive to the witness and disclosure of God, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Open to the witness of those who receive the prophetic word of God. To Moses, to Jesus and the men and women who follow, we behold the lamp shining and beckoning us to see and do new things with God. This lamp gives us something that the human will and mind doesn't get by itself.

Seeking God ourselves, at the right time, the day dawns, and the morning star rises in our hearts. The star of grace and God's vision in us, again, gives us something, leads us into something more, than ordinary human life. And life becomes more interesting, and intense, and unpredictable.

Prophecy doesn't come by human will. God's holiness comes to us as a gift and disclosure. Men and women, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God, acted for

God. Lead us to God. Prophecy is the message from God to us. To lead us into new understanding, new identity, to work for the fairer day of God's kingdom on earth.

There is some hesitancy in a few folks, now that we have elected the first woman as a Presiding Bishop in the Anglican Communion. It has surprised me, a bit, that electing Katherine Jefferts Schori gave some American Episcopalians pause who thought they had affirmed the ministry of ordained women. I suppose it will be the same thing when the first woman wins the White House. When a Star Trek series, Voyager, featured Catherine Janeway as captain, some fans, similarly, balked.

So in electing Katherine Jefferts Schori our Presiding Bishop, scientist of oceans, plane pilot, wife of a scientist, mother of a U. S. Airforce pilot, is there a message from God for us, for the world? South African Bishop Desmond Tutu was asked if electing Bishop Jefferts Schori was likely to cause further strain in the Anglican Communion, and he said, this is our gift to the world.

We are a church that affirms the leadership of women and men, the beloved belonging of people of diverse ethnic, political, sexual, identities. We are willing to hang in there to try to keep relationships and connections ongoing, and we have never kicked others out.

We are a church that loves science and the experience of God. Our liturgy and encounter with Scripture opens us toward a more exciting and unfolding future, rather than steeling us to cling to an imagined, better past.

This is our gift. Let us claim it and be proud of it. Men and women, moved by the Holy Spirit, speak from God, act for God, lead us deeper into God.

For all who are led by the Spirit are born of God. And we do not know where the wind comes from, or goes. But led by it, we embrace and discover the wonders and mysteries of God's love. Amen.