

ERH PHM Newsletter

Spiritual Corner

**Serving Barefoot**

By

Chris VanDenburgh, MSN, RN, Faith Community Nurse

Exodus 3:4-5 (NIV) <sup>1</sup> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." <sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Can you imagine having an experience like this? We are in awe of stories like this one, but often think these kinds of things only happen in the Bible. But do they?

How many times do we, as Christ followers, stop to remember that in our work, at our office, in our churches, or at home, we are standing on holy ground? It is so easy to let our ministry become our job, a routine that we do day by day. Sometimes we could use a "burning bush" experience in order to realize that every personal encounter is an encounter with the divine and that we should take off our shoes in recognition that we are standing on "holy ground".

Every time we go into church, the grocery store, a meeting, or any other work related, routine place, we encounter God in the people with whom we interact. We may not encounter an actual blazing bush, but every time we stand at the evening bedside of our child or speak with another human being, God is present and we are standing on Holy Ground.

Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, in her book, Spirituality in Nursing, says, "God frequently speaks to us from a "burning bush.... If we take off our shoes, we will be able to realize that the place where we stand is holy ground..." She goes on to ask, "What does it really mean to "take off one's shoes?" Could it mean, "stripping away whatever prevents us from experiencing the holy"?

Is it possible that we are wearing shoes that prevent us from experiencing the holy? How about the track shoes that we wear when we are running from one appointment to another, or the practical, sturdy, shoes we wear when we need to get down to business and don't have the time to stop and listen, are we wearing shoes that are a bit uncomfortable, trying to be someone we are not? Or maybe our shoes are soiled and we feel unworthy to do the task God has called us to do, what about that pair of fuzzy, comfortable, slippers we wear when we just want to be left alone and do our own thing, not wanting to be bothered?

I would like to propose that we take off all the shoes that hinder our experiencing the holy and practice barefoot parenting, barefoot friendship, barefoot employment, and barefoot leadership.

On this earth we can experience God in the burning bushes of our lives, and while we are serving God on this earth, we are standing on Holy ground.