Mount Tabor in Galilee is presumed to be the location of the mountain which Jesus, Peter, James, and John climbed. The hike from the base to the summit covers a mile and half rising 1800 feet. At a moderate pace, that hike lasts 25-30 minutes.

Now imagine a journey covering 300 million miles. Last week, a robot spacecraft designed by NASA in California successfully landed on the surface of Mars. The journey lasted seven months. Aboard the Mars Rover Perseverance were sound capturing devices.

Scientists expect that the sounds of Mars will be different than earth sounds. Mars’ thick, carbon dioxide atmosphere means sound behaves differently. Imagine muffling the brightest sounds like the crashing waves to something faint with a constant background thunder. That is how the blowing of the wind sounds on Mars.

I share this recent discovery of sound on Mars because it is a kind of Transfiguration story. The designers of the Rover Perseverance sent the robot on a journey to record the sounds on the planet Mars. Scientists will tell us what this means in the coming weeks and months. As we heard today, Jesus climbed a mountain, perhaps Mt. Tabor in Galilee, and God’s almighty voice was heard in the cloud. Let us see right now what it means.

The voice from the cloud declared: “This is my son, the beloved, listen to him.” The voice changed the lives of the Apostles as we shall see. We too can all relate to how a voice changes our lives. Every mother of a newborn and the child’s father recognize how their lives change when the voice of the child is first heard. When the child cries, this signals the beginning of life outside of the womb. After that first cry, it becomes a mother’s and the father’s duty to care for the newborn child.

(omit from Hispanic homily)

There are other times that a voice heard, a name called, makes all the difference. Anyone who watches the National Football League drafts knows how players wait to hear their name called. The best players are invited to attend the ceremony and triumphantly walk across a stage when their name is called. In 2005, Aaron Rogers was invited to attend and expected to be drafted first overall or at least in the top five. He was overlooked until the 24th pick sitting in the exclusive Green Room under constant attention from the Media for over four hours. It was a nightmare.

During the Vietnam War starting in December of 1969, young men gathered in college dorms and friends’ homes to listen to live TV and radio broadcasts of the U.S. Selective Service System drawing lottery numbers to determine who would and would not be drafted. My own older brother participated in this ritual and other young men in our neighborhood.

A newborn’s cry, a triumphant selection by an NFL Team or being drafted during war, lives change when a voice is heard. The voice of God the Father put the apostles and us into the right relation with the Lord our God. Now in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we have the mediator between God and humankind. The Transfiguration story makes Jesus the sole mediator, the savior chosen by God. Our obedience to him is demanded. Immediately, Jesus made a demand of his own.

He called his followers to be silent about the awesome transfiguration, the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the appearance of the vestment bleached pure white. He told them how long to remain silent – till the Son of Man would rise from the dead.

We know that at first they did not understand. They asked what rising from the dead might mean. We know better. The First Reading from Genesis describes the test of Abraham. Would Abraham willingly sacrifice his only son? Did Abraham believe that God would find another way to make him the Father of a nation? Abraham believed in God’s providence and made ready to sacrifice Isaac until God stopped him. In place of the sacrifice of Isaac, God provided an animal trapped by its horns which Abraham sacrificed to God.

The apostles would one day look at the death of Jesus and see the Abraham story. Yes, God so loved the world that he sacrificed his only begotten son, but this Son rose from the dead. The Son became the first in death and new life. This was the Good News God wanted the apostles to share.

We now are evangelists. This is our time to speak. Join us in saving lives from abortion by taking part in a peaceful protest of prayer in front of Louisville’s abortion clinic downtown on March 19. Sign the list in the back of church for one hour. We simply stand on the sidewalk and say our prayers. This is our time to be evangelists for life. It is the feast day of St. Joseph who protected Mary and Jesus. Joseph is my confirmation name too so it will be a special day for me to live out the grace of confirmation still active in my soul.