



4th Sunday Lent, Yr B

Lectio Divina

Lectio: This Sunday's gospel is part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. He came to Jesus at night. He was an important teacher and a member of the Pharisee Party. He would have known how Jesus had cleared the Temple and miraculous sign¹ Jesus had given. Nicodemus made the connection that Jesus' actions were only possible because God was with Jesus. He wanted to deepen his understanding of God in the actions of Jesus. So he is open to Jesus as a teacher and wants to be changed by what Jesus would teach him. Jesus at first talks to Nicodemus about 'being born again from above' (Jn 3:3). This 'being born again' is the way to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus also says that this 'being born again' is the working of the Holy Spirit. This is confusing to Nicodemus². The teachings he had received, through being a practicing Jew of his times, had passed over the predictions of the suffering of the coming saviour. They had not seen this prediction in the protection from snake-bite when Moses raised the bronze serpent in the desert (Num 21: 4-9). Also, the Jews prayed that God's coming would bring about a condemnation of the world³ and the punishment of the bad. However, Jesus is the Son of God sent to save the world which includes every human person, good or bad. Jesus presents the way to eternal life through his saving actions. Nicodemus has much to learn. Also, many teachings he had received need to be revised. He must come to understand the truth that belief in Jesus is an essential requirement for a follower of Jesus. Jesus is the truth! How is our understanding of God in the actions of Jesus, especially his death on the Cross?

Read: John 3: 14 - 21

Meditatio: What do I see in the image of Jesus' sufferings on the Cross? Do I look to Jesus as my Saviour? How important to me is my faith in Jesus? Do I long for eternal life? Do I appreciate how much I am personally loved by God? Do I look to Jesus as a judge or a saviour? Do I condemn wrong doers or seek to help them? Do I believe that the world has been saved through Jesus' death on the Cross? How do I understand evil in the world though Jesus has saved us? Is my baptism a strength I rely on to overcome evil? Do I use 'darkness' to hide my bad choices? Am I confident that **all** my actions can be exposed by the light of Christ? For what actions (darkness in me) should I seek the Lord's forgiveness? How truthful am I? Is there transparency in all my relationships with others?

Oratio: Pray for an understanding of Jesus' death on the Cross. Pray for a reliance on the saving powers flowing from the Sacrament of Baptism. Pray that we will not condemn people but rather seek ways to help them. Pray that we will never cover up our wrongdoings but rather seek help and forgiveness. Pray that victims may not be blamed for the wrongdoing of others. Pray for those who use power as an excuse for criminal actions. Pray for innocent victims of crime. Pray that truth may come through the processes of the law. Pray for police and all who enforce our laws. Pray for a culture of transparency that truth (especially about crimes) may not be covered up.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Take time in contemplation of an image of Jesus suffering on the Cross.

✍ Fr Joe

John 3: 14 - 21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

**‘The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.
Yes, God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved.
No one who believes in him will be condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,
because he has refused to believe
in the name of God’s only Son.
On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the world
men have shown they prefer
darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it,
for fear his actions should be exposed;
but the man who lives by the truth
comes out into the light,
so that it may be plainly seen that what he does
is done in God.’**

Notes:

1 The first miraculous Sign was the miracle of turning water into wine at Cana (Jn2:1-11). This is like John’s ‘Transfiguration’. In the miracle at Cana, *‘he let his glory be seen and his disciples believed in him’* (Jn 2:11b).

2 We know that ‘being born again’ is Baptism and it transforms us into children of God through the working of the Holy Spirit. The importance and the understanding of Baptism is a main area of reflection during Lent. At Easter we will renew our Baptismal vows. Also, Nicodemus was still clinging to his position and reputation. That is why he came to Jesus under the cover of night. To be fully open to being ‘born from again’ (baptized), Nicodemus (we) must be free of all that paralyses him (us) i.e. all that is ‘darkness’. The first three vows of Baptism are the rejection of evil and sin in all its forms. The last three vows are profession of faith in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3 The word ‘world’ has several meanings. First it is **all of creation** made good by God. Then it is **all that man creates** under the influence of Satan. This ‘man’s world’ is the ‘world’ that Jesus comes to save.