

Reflection for Second Sunday of Lent. Genesis 12: 1-4 John 3:1-17

So, enter Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a Leader of the Jews, obviously a man of some standing. He comes to see Jesus by night, we are told. We can read much into his nocturnal visit if we wish. Why at night? Was he trying to be inconspicuous, afraid of what others might say, or was it simply that he knew Jesus might be available for discussion. Did Nicodemus think that perhaps Jesus' message was worth listening to or was he going to put Jesus right? So much speculation to which we can add our own thoughts, in any event Nicodemus did like a robust discussion. He starts with what could have been a little flattery but soon finds himself in deep water. Nicodemus finds this concept of being born again difficult to accept, he is thinking of the literal rather than the spiritual rebirth. Nicodemus may have a problem with this concept of rebirth but so do we. The title 'born again Christian' is used by some to signify their conversion. We all have been born of the Spirit, whether we accept it or not. We are all children of the Living God. Abraham is promised that he will be the father of a great nation 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' Jesus as he talks with Nicodemus says that we must all be born of the Spirit – the injunction is in the plural, it is not limited to one small, select elite group, it is for us all.

We talk of being born of the Spirit, but what does this mean, how could we define it? Firstly, we must think of what the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is that indefinable part of God all around, that dwells in us all, even though we may not choose to accept it. Accepting an indwelling Holy Spirit within us and within others means that our focus turns to God and the Holy Spirit that are one and the same, so we are born of the Spirit. And we experience an inner transformation brought about by God's Spirit, giving us a new spiritual life and a changed heart aligned with God. This may or may not be a dramatic process for some it is, for others it is a slower growing awareness. God who dwells within us is not an angry vengeful being, there to punish and enslave us but a loving and forgiving God.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send The Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

Andrew Macwilliam