

John 3:7b-15

The Church gives us a delightful gospel reading today. We are introduced to Nicodemus. Prior to our verses provided, we learn about Nicodemus' credentials. He is a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews (Jn 3:1). He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, which was essentially the Supreme Court of the Jews. Nicodemus is also the one who will bring 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' body (Jn 19:38).

We learn that Nicodemus comes at night to talk to Jesus. Of course, in John's Gospel there is a theme of light and darkness. Nicodemus is a good man but worried about what others will think. This reminds me of when I was a deacon in 2012, I gave a homily about the beauty of God's plan for marriage between a man and a woman when this was up for a vote in our state. Naturally, some people got upset as in their minds, marriage is not so much embedded in the order of creation (the Book of Genesis) but rather determined by the ever-shifting sands of human consent.

After the Mass, I had a big line of people who wanted to talk to me. About 80% said thank you for saying something. There had been an awkward silence from the pulpit in that parish on the truth about God's plan for marriage. For weeks following, someone would approach me and after looking to the right and left, say, "Hey, thank you for that homily that you gave. I really appreciate it." They were like Nicodemus.

Our Lord, in wonderful fashion, delivers the well-known, "*You must be born from above.*" The Greek *anōthen* can be translated "again" or "from above." While Nicodemus understands it as "again" (a second natural birth), our Lord clarifies that God is the primary agent in bringing about renewal. Hence, the Church from ancient times has always baptized babies showing that adoption into God's family is God's initiative.

Interestingly, Jesus speaks about baptism as an "earthly thing." A child is given the gift of the Holy Spirit so that he or she may participate in the death and Resurrection of Christ *in this life*. In other words, baptism is a participation in divine life *today*. Given that Jesus is from heaven or has existed eternally with the Father, he can share about "heavenly things." The divine life of Christ that we share in this life will be fully enjoyed and understood in eternal life.

And here is the key. The more you share in the life of Christ, including his death and Resurrection, the more our Lord will reveal "heavenly things" to you. These heavenly things include: the life of the Trinity, the beauty of our Blessed Mother, the joy of the angels, and the virtues of all the saints. By sharing in Christ's life today, may you come to share and enjoy his life in the glorious life to come!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!