

Church of the Divine Love

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 5, 2023 10:15 A.M.

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence

Alleluias are omitted during Lent

Prayer before worship – on insert

A PENITENTIAL ORDER

Processional Hymn #637 – **How firm a foundation**

Opening Acclamation for Lent page 351

The Decalogue page 350

The Confession page 353

THE WORD OF GOD

Kyrie page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Genesis 12:1-4a**

Psalm 121

Second Lesson: **Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

Gradual Hymn #147 – **Now let us all with one accord**

Gospel: **John 3:1-17**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#401 – The God of Abraham praise**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A page 361

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 373

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn **#448 – O God, how deep, how broad, how high**

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn **#473 – Lift high the cross**

Dismissal

Sermon Sunday March 5, 2023

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5,13-17; John 3:1-17

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Nicodemus has stepped into the nighttime of his life. He wants to know, "How can these things be?" In the darkness nothing makes sense and he's looking for answers and understanding. He's not, however, the first or the only one to step into the darkness. Thomas asks a similar question on the night of the last supper. "How can we know the way" (John 14:5)? Before Thomas it was Mary's question to Gabriel announcing that she would give birth to the Son of God. "How can this be, since I am a virgin" (Luke 1:34)? And before Mary it was Zechariah wanting assurance from Gabriel about the son he and Elizabeth would have. "How will I know that this is so" (Luke 1:18)? And I am sure Abram must have wondered, "How can I leave my country, my kindred, and my father's house" (Genesis 12:1)?

Some have said that Nicodemus was hiding in the darkness. He was embarrassed. He was scared and didn't want to be seen or caught. Others have said Nicodemus wasn't a true believer and that his faith was shallow and superficial. A few have even said it was just a matter of scheduling and night was the only time Nicodemus and Jesus could get together. Maybe, but I

don't think so. I don't think it's any of those. I think there is much more to it than that. St. John is using night in a particular way. It's not our usual understanding of the word. St. John is using it to describe a condition or a circumstance. In St. John's account of the gospel night is that time, Jesus says, "when no one can work" (Jn. 9:4). Our usual daytime activities have no power or meaning in the night. We are unable to create and sustain our own life in the night. Elsewhere Jesus speaks of night as the time when we stumble because there is no light in us and we just can't see the way forward (Jn. 11:10). Night is the separation, fragmentation, and division within us that can become betrayal of ourselves and others. Remember Judas? He got up and left the table, St. John writes, "and it was night" (Jn.13:30). Night describes those times we fish all night but catch nothing (Jn. 21:3). Our efforts prove fruitless and our nets remain empty.

Coming to Jesus by night is not a statement about the time, Nicodemus' motive, or his faith. It is, rather, a description of Nicodemus and his life, a description that probably fits all of us at one time or another. Coming by night is the recognition that there is a daytime Nicodemus and a nighttime Nicodemus; just as there is a daytime and a nighttime in our life. By day Nicodemus knows who he is. He has an identity. He is a Pharisee. He has a role and a reputation as a leader of the Jews. He knows and applies the law. People listen to and follow him. He has a particular place in society. He fits in. He has security and power. By night, however, Nicodemus is lost and confused. He cannot see or understand. Nothing makes sense. He's in the dark, as we say. His work, accomplishments, reputation, and place in society no longer provide stability or answers. Everything has changed. He's stumbling in the dark. Daytime certainty has given way to nighttime questions. "How can these things be?" By day he keeps the faith. By night, however, his nets come up empty. He's looking for something the daytime life just cannot give him.

We probably all know what that's like. We live daytime lives and we live nighttime lives. By day all is well. We live with a sense of identity and security. We have a place and purpose. Our life has meaning and direction. Daytime reveals what is, but darkness reveals nothing. By night everything is hidden. We stumble through the darkness, grasping for something to hold, seeking answers and explanations for our life. Daytime life is the life we create for ourselves. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. We all do it and we need to. Some of those things are necessary. The problem is that daytime life keeps us stuck in the cycle of always having to create and re-create our lives. Somehow, we can never get enough. We never quite get there. It seems that which we most want is always just beyond our grasp. That's important information to know. It means we cannot keep doing the same old things and expect a different result. It means no matter how hard we try, how much we gather, or how much we know something will always be missing from our daytime life. It will always be less than the life God intends and desires for us. No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born again. No matter how full, beautiful, or successful daytime life is it will always be incomplete, fragile, and fleeting. How could it not be? It's the life we have created for ourselves and "what is born of the flesh is flesh. "When we realize that about our self and our life, we have entered the nighttime of life. Here's the irony. The very life we create for ourselves often becomes the circumstances that take us into the darkness. We

keep doing the same old thing but nothing changes. We're so exhausted we can't muster the energy to re-create our life one more time. We have everything we want, everything is fine, but something is lacking. Those and a thousand others like them are the start of our darkness.

Most of us do whatever we can to avoid or get out of the darkness. Nighttime living isn't much fun. It's difficult, uncomfortable, even painful. It's not our first choice. It is, however, necessary. That's why we are marked with ashes and reminded of our mortality. We must remember that what is born of the flesh is flesh and that there is more to us and our lives than what we can create for ourselves. It's why this season of Lent focuses on the very opposite of daytime living: letting go instead of possessing, hunger instead of fullness, self-denial instead of self-satisfaction, change instead of status quo, self-examination instead of blissful ignorance, and darkness rather than light. The great temptation in the nighttime is to think that if we just get the answer, if we can understand and explain it all, then we'll know what to do. We'll do it better this time. We'll do it differently this time. Things will change and we'll get what we want. That's what Nicodemus is doing. "How can these things be?" He wants an answer, information. That's just more daytime living and it doesn't work in the nighttime of life.

This, however, is the Spirit's work not ours. We cannot birth ourselves. We can only feel and give way to the rhythm of the contractions. So don't flee the darkness. Don't fight the night. Let yourself be born. The contractions of the darkness are God reshaping, forming, and molding you in the likeness of Christ. Isn't that what we really want? Isn't that why we've shown up here today? Isn't that what this holy season of Lent is about? Lent is our reminder that the nighttime of life, no matter how dark, is always filled with the promise of new life, full life, abundant life, God's own life, what Jesus calls eternal life. Why settle for re-creating ourselves one more time when Christ is dying to give us a life, we could never create for ourselves? The luminous darkness shines in the nighttime of life. It did for Nicodemus, Thomas, Mary, Zechariah, Abram and Sarai. These passages teach us that we're called into a story that's bigger than we can imagine. The story is full of mystery and complexity, but ultimately, it's a story about and by God. And at the beginning, at the end, and at the heart of that story is love. It's this love that saves us, propels us through hard times, and may even call us into uncomfortable and difficult situations. But throughout it all, God is there with us. For God so loved the world that God gave of God's self to be with us and give us life – no matter what. Lent is a time to realize that God's gifts are better than any we could ever imagine, and they pull us ever closer into God's loving embrace. Let us dwell in that love that we have received from God, that mysterious, saving, and disruptive love. **Amen.**

Easter flower memorial envelopes are enclosed. Please clearly print the names of your loved ones you wish to memorialize and return by Sunday, April 2nd. Make checks payable to

The Church of the Divine Love Altar Guild.

2 LENT

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

(also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:30 PM AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM

AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

10AM-2PM

THRIFT SHOP

8:30 PM

AA MEETING

SATURDAY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

SET CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR

3 LENT

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP OFF IN THE KITCHEN

| | Today | Next Week |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Eucharistic Minister | Roe Prosser | Jess Berbeck |
| Coffee Hour | Judy Golden | Janet Croft |

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing. Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles them. Especially we remember before you:

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Grace Schinella | Lourdes S. | Bob Curley |
| John Mulligan | Arlene Goodenough | Celeste |
| Chris Dickson | Kate Jones | Deb P. |
| Michael Echevarria | John Rocco | Gabriel |
| Barbara Stinson | Michael & Family | Warren |
| Charlotte H. | Bernie Walther | Anthony |
| Mo (Rachael) | Bill Conklin Sr. | Carolyn |
| Anthony Paribello | Barbara Curran | Del |
| Ciara | Robert Sweat | Aidan |
| Sally & Roger | Sophia | Carol K. |
| People of Haiti | Christopher & Family | Julia |
| Mary & Family | People of Ukraine | Tim |
| Nathan Treadwell | Vincent | Art |
| Margaret | Kaylee | Judy |
| Tor | | |

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the
spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you,
from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that
with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may
worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn
but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that
all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and for ever. Amen

