

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – March 14, 2021

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

Reflection on the Gospel: *John 3:1-21*

*Verses 1-15:* Nicodemus was a leading Pharisee and a well-known religious leader of the Jewish people. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the high court in ancient Israel. He had heard about this man, Jesus and was curious about him. The legalism of Pharisees perplexed him and he hungered for the truth. Nicodemus realizes that Jesus must have come from God and sought him out. Concerned about what others would think of him, he came to Jesus at night.



At first glance Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus regarding the spirit would appear confusing, but not to us who have been blessed with the "spirit" through baptism and confirmation. Jesus challenges Nicodemus when he says to him, "If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?". John's gospel does not seem to continue this discussion much further. I believe that Nicodemus continued to ponder Jesus' words as he became a believer.

When I meditate on the story of Nicodemus, I consider how fortunate that I am that my parents brought me into the spirit through baptism. Sometimes I have wondered whether I would have been able to accept these teachings if I had not been reared in them. So I am blessed!

*Verses 16-21:* I have made the determination that the Nicodemus encounter ended with verse 15 and the subsequent verses were solely John. Verse 16 is notably one of the most well known in all of the New Testament: "*For God so loved the world that God gave the only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life*". So powerful! It is quite humbling to realize that God has loved me (us) since before the world began. How astonishing and incomprehensible!

I can recall times when I was down on myself and would think, well this person and that person (good people) think I'm okay, so maybe I'm not so bad. Fortunately, I've outgrown that mindset and I think how good God's been to me and I count my blessings. (These days, I thank God for the good, the bad and the sad in my life.)

It's curious in this week's Zoom meeting with my women's study group we discussed an excerpt from a Joyce Rupp (my go-to gal!) book. The subject matter was "God's Passionate Love for Us". How timely as I am writing this! We are beloved and cherished by God since before the beginning of time. How utterly awesome! Rupp reveals that a retreat she and her co-facilitator carried mirrors around the room and as they held the mirrors in front of each attendee, they said, "May you always know that God is crazy about you." And that, dear friends, is my wish for each of you.

*Joan Fulton*