

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Fourth Sunday of Lent (B)
March 14, 2021
“Darkness & Light”

Today’s Gospel on this 4th Sunday of Lent speaks of a meeting between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. The passage tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus at “night”. At nighttime it is usually dark outside; not as easy to see what’s going on. (John 3:14-21)

Nicodemus was not only a Pharisee, but he was also a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the leadership council (political elite) of the Jewish people. This makes Nicodemus a prominent person in the community.

The fact that Nicodemus came to Jesus in the dark of the night indicates that he didn’t want others to know, particularly other Pharisees, that he was meeting with Jesus and was on friendly terms with Jesus.

Nicodemus asks Jesus questions and Jesus shares many spiritual insights with Him. Jesus makes a reference to darkness and light.

He said:

“The light came into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were wicked.”

“Everyone who practices evil hates the light:
-- he does not come near it for fear his deeds will be exposed.”

“But he who acts in truth comes into the light, to make it clear that his deeds are done in God.” (John 3:21)

The motif of Darkness and Light is very prominent in Christian literature and liturgy.

- In the beginning, God created the light, separating darkness from light (Gn 1:3).
- John the Apostle said: “God is light, in Him there is no darkness” (1 Jn 1:5)
- In speaking to Nicodemus – it is understood that Jesus “is the light” that came into the world.

In our Easter Vigil liturgy, the church is kept dark before the Mass. The liturgy itself begins after sunset.

- The Easter candle, which represents the light of Christ, brings light to a world darkened by sin, the candle is prepared outside the church from a special fire and then it is brought into the church.

- The priest holding the candle high proclaims “light of Christ” as he enters the dark church. The people say: “Thanks be to God.”
- The individual candles of the faithful are lit from the Easter candle as they enter the church.
- The light of the Easter candle (Christ) “splits the darkness” of the world.
- And the faithful who receive the light of Christ from the Easter candle bring the light of Christ to the dark world.

Evil and sin are referred to as darkness because they are contrary to the light of God.

In English literature: Milton, in his “Paradise Lost”, refers to Satan as the prince of darkness.

- It was Satan who tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God – and the darkness of sin entered into the world.

Jesus – through whom all things were created – and is light – by coming into the world, reintroduces light into the world.

But in the Gospel passage Jesus said, “Men do not want the light (meaning Him) – because their acts are evil – and they prefer darkness and their evil acts.”

In fact, they try to hide from the light so that no one can see their evil acts.

- They prefer darkness and lies.
- Their father is the devil the “prince of darkness”.
- Jesus told the Pharisees that Satan was their father (John 8:44).

Believers prefer to live in the light:

- They want their good deeds to be seen by everyone, not to glorify themselves, but to bring glory to God their Father (Matt 5:16).

Jesus told his disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14).

- “Set your light on a lampstand where it can be seen by everyone.”
- “Your light must shine before men” to bring praise to your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:16).

Every believer must evaluate his own acts:

- Are they worthy of light – and give glory to God?
- Or are they acts of darkness – meant to honor Satan, the prince of darkness.

(Examples of Potential Darkness:)

- Businesses that keep the lights down very low (i.e., nightclubs and bars).
- Business transactions done in secret).

- Secret societies that conduct their activities in secret (membership is kept secret).
- Political arrangements done in secret.
- Judas betrayed Jesus (at “night”). (John 13:30)
- Anything else that is done in secret because if it were known that person would be ashamed of it, or they know that others would object to it.
- We have all done things secretly at times that we did not want anyone to know about – because we would be ashamed of it.

During this season of Lent and every day of our life, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us turn toward the light of Christ.

- Help make us true children of God and of light.
- Help us to reject darkness and the deeds of darkness, knowing that God sees all things and knowing that “nothing is hidden from God’ to Him the night is as clear as day (Ps 139:12).