

## 4th Sunday of Lent, Year B

### GOSPEL

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Jesus said to Nicodemus:

‘The Son of Man must be lifted up  
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.  
Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost  
but may have eternal life.  
For God sent his Son into the world  
not to condemn the world,  
but so that through him the world might be saved.  
No one who believes in him will be condemned;  
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,  
because he has refused to believe in the name of God’s only  
Son.  
On these grounds is sentence pronounced:  
that though the light has come into the world  
men have shown they prefer darkness to the light  
because their deeds were evil.  
And indeed, everybody who does wrong  
hates the light and avoids it,  
for fear his actions should be exposed;  
but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light,  
so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in  
God.’

(John 3:14–21)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling Council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. He was attracted to the teaching of Jesus but was afraid to openly become a supporter, so he came to see Jesus during the darkness of night.
- We meet Nicodemus again in John’s Gospel when he brings myrrh and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus after the crucifixion (John 19:39). He brings a lavish amount, ‘weighing about a hundred pounds!’ Nicodemus’ journey to faith is complete, and he openly acknowledges Jesus as Lord.
- Jesus’ words about being ‘lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert’ refer to an incident when, while wandering in the desert, the people of Israel were attacked by venomous serpents. God instructed Moses to raise a bronze image of a serpent on a standard. All who looked on it were cured (Numbers 21:8–9). Jesus being ‘lifted up’ on the cross was to become the salvation of all.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

Nicodemus comes in search of truth but has difficulty in accepting who Jesus is. He struggles to reach beyond the understandings of his upbringing within Judaism. In a sense, Jesus’ words to him are a reassurance that if he publicly embraces faith in Jesus, his life will be saved. Condemnation only comes to those who have had the opportunity to embrace faith but have refused it.

In John’s Gospel, the greatest moment in Jesus’ life is the moment of his death on the cross. This is not simply a moment of suffering and death but a spiritual exultation because it is at that moment that God’s love for the world is made manifest. ‘God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son’ so that we could have life. The only proper response to this great love and gift of life is to choose light and not darkness.

- What have been some of the moments of exultation in your life?
- What have been the periods of darkness?
- Is there a struggle in coming into the light?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What areas of your life have been touched by the light of Christ?
- How do you think of ‘eternal life’?
- What does it mean to be ‘children of the light’?
- Light a candle each night this week as you pray. Proclaim God’s truth and act for the light this week. Carry the light of the gospel wherever you go.
- Nicodemus comes at night to speak secretly with Jesus. Are there barriers to your being open about your exploration of the gospel? How do you explain to friends and family your search for the truth? How easy or difficult is it to ‘come into the light’ —that is, to make your faith public? Share your thoughts on this.
- A variation on today’s collect is apt for those approaching baptism or reception:

*O God, who through your Word, reconcile the human race to yourself,  
grant, we pray, that with devotion and faith,  
we may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.*

Pray this prayer often this week.

