

Tuesday in the Second Week of Easter

April 13, 2021

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

Acts 4: 32–37; Psalm 93; John 3:14–15; John 3: 7–15

Jesus' appearance to his disciples on the evening of the day of resurrection, when the disciples were behind locked doors because of fear, might be said to be foreshadowed by the story of Nicodemus. Yesterday, we had the beginning of this encounter. Nicodemus traveled in the darkness of night to reach Jesus. Nicodemus was an educated man with a position. He was among the rulers "of the Judeans."¹ He believed that God himself had sent Jesus as a teacher—perhaps as a prophet. With today's continuation of the narrative, Jesus took the conversation in a direction that Nicodemus did not grasp. Jesus said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without begin born again, from above."²

Today's gospel continues with words that seem to make no sense to Nicodemus. He disappears from the narrative but returns twice later in this gospel. The next time will be during a Feast of Tabernacles. The chief priests and Pharisees send officers to arrest Jesus, but they refuse to do so. They have heard Jesus' words—and they are more impressed by his words than by the orders they have been given. Nicodemus interrupts the complaints about the officers for failing to arrest Jesus. He says, "Does our law judge a person without first giving him or her a hearing and learning what he or she does?"³—the Greek here is inclusive.⁴ Because of this, it is not entirely unexpected that Nicodemus will appear again in its narrative. Nicodemus will assist Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus' body. Nicodemus buys a fortune in spices. In John, there is no rush to bury Jesus. Unlike his disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus overcome whatever fear they have to bury with care the crucified body of the Lord.

¹ John 3:1.

² John 3:3. Translation: Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 88.

³ John 7:51. My translation.

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/text/john/7-51.htm>, (accessed 13 April 2021).

One takeaway from today’s gospel lesson could be this: “Can you and I understand earthly things enough to believe in heavenly things?”

Father Pete Powell sent his sermon last Sunday to me, and I posted it yesterday on our parish website. These are his words: “I am convinced that the Ruler of This World is real whether we call it evil, Satan or the Devil Evil wishes one thing for us, and that is that we find ourselves alone, insecure and doubting all hope. In other words, Satan wants us in the Upper Room without hope. There are many ways in which the Devil works to isolate us . . . [to live our lives] in fear.”⁵ The opposite of fear, I believe, is God.

This Easter Season is a gift to us, a time to reflect on the source of our lives—God—and to trust in our lives unfolding as members of the Body of Christ. I conclude with a collect that we hear every year on the Sunday closest to August 31:

*Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.*⁶

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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⁵ <https://www.stmvirgin.org/sermons/2021/4/12/the-second-sunday-of-easter-the-holy-eucharist-by-the-reverend-dr-peter-ross-powell>, (accessed 13 April 2021).

⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 233.