

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle within us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight O Lord, you who are rock, redeemer & Renewer of us all. Amen.**

Grace and Peace be with you, dear Friends!

I must confess to you that Trinity Sunday is one of my FAVORITE Sundays and one of the most dreaded Sundays. Why? It's simple... the Trinity is a mystery...one of the great mysteries of church doctrine, in fact!

Growing up in a Christian family, we (my sister & brothers & I) were engaged in Christian faith formation classes. My mom even became a small group teacher. I learned there were specific questions and there were specific answers to the questions. We were required to learn the answers to the questions in case the Bishop called on us at our confirmation. We were to be armed and ready to state, 'God is everywhere' when asked 'Where is God?' As a fourth grader, it was rough to memorize all the answers to the questions to be officially CONFIRMED in the faith.

Here are the things I have learned since the fourth grade... it is good to have questions... and it is ok to not have all the answers... especially when it comes to faith. In fact, there are many persons through the scriptures that cry out to God and ask questions... especially questions like 'why'... why did this have to happen? Why did this suffering have to go for so long?

Just last week we were confronted with the test question, can these bones have life in them again? And Ezekiel answered, 'O Lord, only you know.'

Yes, there are questions to be asked and mysteries that may never be fully understood. Yet, we dare to dream and pursue mission and ministry TRUSTING in the power and presence of the Triune One---God father, God Son and God Spirit – the three in One!

Jesus answered many questions... over and over again...from his disciples, from the scribes, from the other religious authorities, and even Pontius Pilate, a Roman leader in Jerusalem.

Thomas asked, how can we know the way? Others asked, 'who is this ...that commands even the wind and the waves?'

The passage from Johannine gospel is very well known, but it occurs because Nicodemus has questions. He is a leader in the religious council, but he has questions of Jesus. Nicodemus dares to seek understanding of these things Jesus has re-presented about Abba Father God, the kin-dom of God, the relationship of love, justice, and peace that is promised.

The story of Nicodemus offers a picture of someone who is curious about Jesus, who maybe even wants to believe, but struggles. Notice that Nic comes with a clear affirmation of Jesus' connection to God. In response, Jesus immediately jumps to a huge assertion about being born again/anew/from above. And that's when Nicodemus curiosity turns to struggle.

By the way, this is a common writing technique in this gospel, the confusion or misunderstanding of Jesus' dialogue partner gives Jesus a chance to elaborate. After Nicodemus' initial confusion stemming from taking Jesus' words literally, the only other thing Nicodemus says is, "how can this be?" This question gives Jesus a good excuse to talk some more.

There's more to Nicodemus than this conversation... and I believe the rest of Nic's mentions are important for us as disciples... followers of Jesus. David Lose, a Lutheran theologian comments on Nicodemus' journey in this way:

Here, in chapter 3, 'is his main appearance. Again near the end of chapter 7, is when Nicodemus, if not exactly standing up for Jesus let alone proclaiming his faith in him, nevertheless reminds his colleagues that, according to the law, they should not judge Jesus before giving him a trial. And for offering that reminder he is rebuked ([7:45-52](#)). Then he makes a third appearance, this time after Jesus' crucifixion, when Nicodemus

accompanies Joseph of Arimathea to collect, anoint, and bury the body of Jesus, the one just executed by the Romans ([19:38-42](#)). By his actions Nicodemus declares this allegiance to one who had just been executed for a capital offense.'

As Nicodemus shows up at multiple points in John's Gospel, we can see he grows in his faith. At first he brings questions and is confused. He later invites others to slow in their judgment. He finally risks publically honoring the one just executed. Faith, at least in Nicodemus' case, takes time. Indeed, his journey with Jesus continues across most of the Gospel of John and, we might assume, beyond.

For some, coming to faith was easy and fast and strong and they've rarely doubted. But for others – maybe most others – faith comes more in fits and starts, two steps forward and another back. Perhaps at times things seem clear and at others just plain confusing. Or maybe faith feels a lot more like an endless series of questions rather than easy and forthright affirmations.

I've heard it said that Nicodemus is the patron saint of curiosity. I love that. I think you could also claim him as the patron saint of all those of us with an uneasy or restless faith; who aren't satisfied with easy answers, those who keep questioning, those who want to believe and also understand, or at least to believe even when we don't understand.

And another thing... this story says a lot not only about Nicodemus, but also about God. God is patient. God doesn't give up. If God keeps working in and on and through Nicodemus across three years and sixteen chapters in John's Gospel, God will keep working in and on and through us. No matter how long it takes.

So, what's your question? In the Children's Time a bit ago, I invited everyone to send to me their questions. Be ready to send them to my email...[pastor.saintjames@verizon.net](mailto:pastor.saintjames@verizon.net). And include your questions, too.

One thing I know for certain... I have questions, kids have questions, and I know that you have questions too. Send them in by June 15. We will address them through a series this summer.

We don't have to understand the Trinity to be part of the church created, redeemed, and renewed by the Triune God. We can grow as disciples, together, being brave and asking questions, seeking wisdom, as we put our faith into action as we love and serve, seeking to transform lives with our transformed (and transforming) lives **as we stay rooted in God's love, keep Jesus as the center, and trust in the leading and power of Holy Spirit, Take heart, have courage and DARE to walk forward in ministry sharing the good news, empowered with presence!**

**Let us pray...**

***Prayer of Response      Nicene Creed      UMH 880***

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen-

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the Only Son of God, eternally Begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, o one being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us ~~men~~ and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**May it be so! So be it. Amen.**