

Homily. 4th Sunday in Lent. Year. B. 9/10 March 2024.

St. Paul tells us that we are like God's work of art, created anew in Christ Jesus in order to live the good life as from the very beginning God meant us to live it. That some statement there, and St. Paul is absolutely right in what he says about us as long as we understand how God creates us and the sort of artwork that we are becoming.

By this I mean that we aren't like the Mona Lisa or Beethoven's 9th Symphony or St. Peter's Basilica, ready to be put behind glass and hung in the Louvre, or printed and distributed as a music score, or have our doors open daily so that people can come inside and take a tour. No, the kind of Divine artwork St. Paul means is that we're like a piece of fine pottery still being shaped and glazed before firing, an exquisite glasswork still being blown, or Gaudi's La Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona, always under construction until we're perfected. As long as we think of ourselves as this sort of Divine artwork we'll be on the right track.

This brings us then to Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee of his time and his private night time conversation with Jesus. He already believed that Jesus came from God and was doing God's work. He wanted to know more about Jesus and how he could get closer to what God wanted for him. In turn, Jesus said that he had to be born again, meaning that Nicodemus had to be recreated into the artwork God had originally meant him to be. It's part of this conversation that we hear in the gospel. What we discover is that God sent Jesus to save, not to condemn, to embrace the whole world in God's arms of love, not to shake a finger at us in

admonition. God's purpose is to save us from our lostness, giving us the gift of life eternal.

What we have to do is believe in Jesus, accept his good purpose for us and move our lives more and more into his light of truth. Then, in this sharp and clear light, God's mercy and creativity works away at making us anew, day after day, until our day our eternity dawns. Prayer is one of the most essential tools that we can use in this creative work. We can talk to the Lord just like Nicodemus did. Prayer, like the hands of a potter, the mouth and breath of a glass blower or the chisel of a mason works at recreating us in our minds, hearts, souls and imagination so that like the clay, molten glass and stone we keep on being shaped into the art God intends us to be. Praying, talking and listening attentively to God's word and being transparent, open, honest and trusting with God slowly but surely brings us out of the dark shadows into Christ's Light of Life.

Like us, Nicodemus was a work of God's art in the making. He started his journey as we all do in the darkness of night. On Good Friday afternoon we'll hear that after Jesus Crucifixion and death he joined Joseph of Arimathaea in going to Governor Pilate and asking for Jesus body. St. John tells us that they saw to Jesus preparation and entombment. The great sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary, for us and for all of the world, finally brought him our into the light. This is the journey you and I are making now, from our night and secrets into the fullness of God's truth and light. In our prayerful, sacrificial and serving works over this Lenten Season this way and pattern is deepened within us. By God's grace may we continue steadfastly on this path until the dawn of our Easter Day.