



Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

Introductory Prayer: In placing myself in your presence, Lord, I wish to shake off all laziness and distractions and listen to your words of life. You deserve my full attention, gratitude and praise, because you are my loving, merciful Creator and Redeemer. I believe in you. I hope in you. I love you. I adore you, and I long to be more united to you through love.

Petition: Lord, help me discern your presence in the Eucharist and all of the circumstances of my day.

1. A Shaky Member of the Sanhedrin: Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the leading class in Israel. He had certainly caught word about the miracles Jesus had worked. Perhaps he had heard one of Christ's sermons. Something aroused in him a deeper search for God. But Nicodemus was risking quite a bit in making this visit, for Jesus had already raised a few eyebrows in the Sanhedrin, some whom were already

envious of Jesus. Nicodemus' heart is not at peace. He seeks to know more about this new way; thus, he comes to Jesus at night. Have I allowed routine to set in, diminishing or eliminating all desire for improvement in my life? Have I already labeled Christ as a "radical" so as not to lose my comfort zone? What price am I willing to pay for this peace of heart, for eternal life?

2. The Forbidden Question: Jesus gives Nicodemus the answer to his unasked question. The problem the Pharisees had with Jesus was their outlook on life. God had chosen Israel as his people. He had made a covenant with them: If they would fulfill his commandments then God would bless them. But the Pharisees had come to understand everything in a very legalistic manner, and the true love of God and neighbor had been forgotten. This is why Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. He needed a radical change in his life. Have I, too, fallen into a legalistic mentality, concentrating merely on the fulfillment of my obligations and brushing aside the weightier matters of loving God and neighbor? Have I opened the door for God to enter into my daily existence and bring his salvation?

3. The Serpent on the Pole: A man cannot save himself. Only God can save man. How? "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." This phrase harks back to the Exodus, to God leading his Chosen People out of slavery into the Promised Land (cf. Numbers 20:4-9). That serpent fixed to a pole is a sign of curing (it is the logo for medicine even today). It is also a symbol of Jesus being nailed to the cross. Every day, the hands of his priests lift Jesus up. As they celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus renews the memorial of his death as he offers himself to the Father for the salvation of mankind. Here is where Nicodemus was unable to comprehend the depth of Jesus' words: "so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, as I kneel before your cross in this prayer, I thank you for kindling in my heart a renewed desire for holiness and salvation. I know I need a new mentality and a deep conversion of heart. Give me the strength to leave aside my mediocrity and truly search for you throughout this day.

Resolution: I will attend Mass today with special fervor, seeking Jesus in the Eucharist, and if possible, I will also receive him in Holy Communion.

