

Coming Out into the Light

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B



The sandals came off first, marking the parameters of holy ground. The lamp cast its expanding glow, pushing shadows stubbornly up against the wall, and even though the neighborhood was asleep, the Spirit of God was ready to be roused.

Nicodemus approached Jesus under the cover of darkness, sneaking off to engage the man behind the miracles (John 3). As a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, this Pharisee would have been ostracized if he were discovered in the company of Jesus. A spirit of inquiry, however, inflamed the man to seek out the Chosen One and discover the truth behind the Christ.

The conversation that followed ended not in darkness but in light.

JOHN 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so also must the Chosen One be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One may have eternal life."

"Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten One, that whoever believes may not die, but have eternal life. God sent the Only Begotten One into the world not to condemn the world, but that through the Only Begotten, the world might be saved.

Whoever believes in the Only Begotten avoids judgement, but whoever does not believe is judged already for not believing in the name of the Only Begotten of God."

“On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light came into the world, people showed they preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. Indeed, those who do wrong, hate the light and avoid it, for fear their actions will be exposed; but whoever lives the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God.”

FOR REFLECTION

1. In your life experience as an LGBTQ person/ally, what have been the most challenging conversations you have had? How has the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or conversations with a spiritual director or trusted friend, helped you find grace, illumination, affirmation, forgiveness and/or peace? Have such conversations empowered you to more dialogue?
2. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so also must the Chosen One be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One may have eternal life.*" The paradox of being lifted up here, is being "*lifted-up*" to the cross. How have members of the LGBTQ/ally community been "*lifted-up*" in this way over the course of history to serve as examples of LGBTQ hope, strength and new life? How has this paradox featured in your own life?
3. Some people feel that institutional religion often wants to control people and limit one's relationship with God to the example of the past, the traditions of worship, and gendered Scripture interpretation. How do you encounter the wild, untamable Spirit of the Living God in institutional religion? As an LGBTQ person/ally, have you ever used religious legalism as a substitute for love of God and neighbor? How do you break "*tablets of stone*" and heed the "*tablets written in your heart*" (2 Corinthians 3:3)?
4. Nicodemus appears three times in the Gospel of John. In Chapter 3 verse 2, Nicodemus *comes to* Christ. In Chapter 7 verses 45-52, Nicodemus *defends* Christ, and in Chapter 19 verses 39-40, Nicodemus *honors* Christ by preparing God's body for burial. During this season of Lent how will you engage Christ? How have leaders in the church or the LGBTQ/ally community inspired you to come to Christ, defend Christ or honor Christ?
5. How has the example of Nicodemus invited you to come out of the darkness, or "out of the closet," in a way, so that the words of scripture may be fulfilled in you: "*Whoever lives the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God.*" For what reason/s might you still "*prefer the darkness*" at this time?

PRAYER



Psalm 27: 1, 3-6, 11, 13

YHWH, you are my light, my salvation - whom shall I fear?
You are the fortress of my life - of whom should I be afraid?

Though an army mounts a siege against me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, I shall still be confident.

One thing I ask of you, YHWH, one thing I seek:
that I may dwell in your house all the days of my life,
to gaze on your beauty and to meditate in your Temple.

You will keep me safe in your shelter when trouble arises,
you will hide me under the cover of your tent;
and set me high upon a rock.
Even now my head is held high
above my enemies on every side!

I will offer in your tent sacrifices of great joy -
I will sing and make music to you, YHWH!

Teach me your way, YHWH, and lead me on the straight path
I have confidence that I will see the goodness of God
in the land of the living!