

A Gospel reflection from Deacon Steve
Grab your Bibles and Read John 3:7-15

The Pharisees know quite a bit about the Old Testament but won't submit to the authority of Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jewish leader, he knew the law. He was the ancient equivalent of a politician, priest, and professor all rolled into one.

There is a little bit of a Pharisee inside all of us. At times we go to church out of obligation, or because we want to see who's all there, not because we want to get the most out of mass. I am often guilty of this in my own life. I find the more I read about the Pharisees the more I see some of their sins in my own life. I want to overcome this. Nicodemus was a man who likely struggled in the same ways we do, but then he found Jesus. There is much we can learn from Nicodemus on how we can overcome the mindset of a Pharisee in his conversation with Jesus.

Nicodemus went to go see Jesus at night. He was afraid to be seen with Him during day. When Nicodemus met Jesus, he said he believed Jesus came from God as a teacher. Nicodemus believed this because no one could do the miracles Jesus was doing unless God is with him. Many of the other Pharisees witnessed the same miracles that Nicodemus did, and did not believe.

We struggle being like the Pharisees, but deep in our hearts we want to follow Jesus. And like Nicodemus we too can break away from our Pharisee like failings and follow Jesus.

Jesus knew when he met Nicodemus that he was different. We see an incredible conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus that would change Nicodemus's life forever. Jesus knew that what it meant to be born again would free Nicodemus from living the life of a Pharisee. And this does not only apply to Nicodemus it applies to all who seek to know the Kingdom of God. Like all of us, Nicodemus wanted to be born again.

What Nicodemus needs to realize is that knowledge and moral behavior aren't enough to make him right with God. As long as he thinks that he can make things right by himself, he's going to be lost. The only way for a person to change his nature is through a rebirth, this means being reborn through the Spirit of God.

Jesus shared with Nicodemus that He came into the world, not to judge it as many of the Pharisees have done and many of us do as well, but rather to save the world and give eternal life. This life and salvation came at a great cost, which Nicodemus would later witness that Jesus would have to pay to give these gifts that are available to all who believe in Jesus.

If we are to leave our Pharisee-like lifestyle and be transformed as Nicodemus was we must learn from him. First, we must have a heart to know Jesus. Then we must repent of our own sins and recognize our need for a Savior. Lastly, we must remove our faith and trust in ourselves and put them in Jesus and make him the center of our life. We must surrender and do so daily. If we keep our focus here we will keep our minds more on Christ and what he did for us, rather than on our own reputation and religious activities in comparison to other. We will serve and lay down our lives out of love, much like Nicodemus did at Jesus's grave, rather than out of recognition and obligation.