

WE THIRST FOR YOU, O LORD

Proclaiming the Faith

John 3:14-21

The events that give rise to the teachings in today's Gospel begin a few verses before when the Pharisee Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus secretly in the night. Nicodemus has heard about Jesus and is curious, but he is also afraid. He wants to believe, but he isn't quite ready to make a public commitment.

The people of the Gospels aren't so very different from us. Nicodemus

is intrigued by Jesus but unwilling to be seen publicly with him. How often have you learned that someone you've known for a long time is or was raised as a Catholic? This is particularly true of famous people who are afraid that making their faith public will harm their careers. Sometimes we fall victim to this same temptation, hiding our faith out of fear. However, we should remember that while we fear that we may be mocked or made fun of for our faith, in some parts of the world today, people

actually are being killed for their Christian beliefs.

Truly the words of John 3:16 ("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") are at the heart of our Catholic faith. The season of Lent is the perfect reminder that we are called to let our faith show in our daily lives — with joy and fervor!

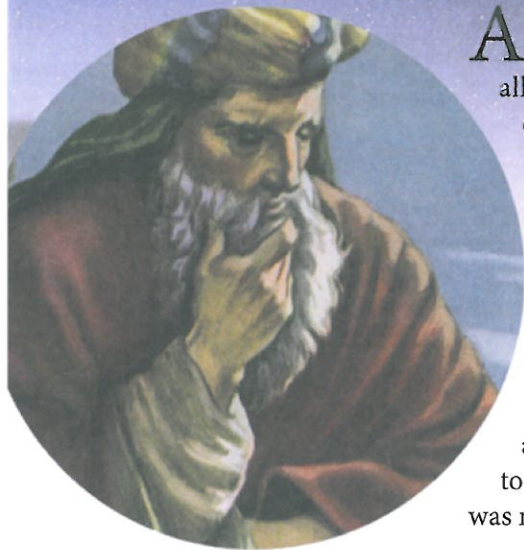
FOR REFLECTION

- › Do the people I work with, go to school with, and spend free time with know that I am Catholic?
- › Who encourages me most in my faith? Who can I encourage?
- › How can I come more closely to the light of Jesus this Lent?



OUR FAITH

A Good Pharisee



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Although the word “Pharisee” has come to have a very negative connotation, not all Pharisees were wicked. Nicodemus, the curious Pharisee in today’s Gospel, was one of those who eventually followed Jesus. Besides his secret visit to Jesus at night, he appears twice more in Scripture. A member of the Sanhedrin, he defends Jesus when the chief priests and other Pharisees are debating what to do with Jesus. And after the Crucifixion, along with Joseph of Arimathaea, he brought about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus’ body. Tradition says that he was martyred for the Faith.

Catechism CONNECTION

“By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: ‘In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.’ God ‘shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 604

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Pretzel Prayers

Once considered the official Catholic food of Lent, pretzels date back at least 1,400 years. Because fat, eggs, and milk were part of the Lenten abstinence, these little bites of bread made only with flour, salt, and water were invented. They were wrapped in the shape of arms crossed in prayer and the three holes in the middle represented the Trinity. Traditionally, pretzels were the perfect food to share with people who were struggling for food or living on the streets because they didn’t spoil easily. Make your own pretzels as a family (find a recipe on the Internet) and share them with someone in need in your neighborhood or community.



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Lenten Prayer

Unto you, I cry, my God!

“No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it [under a bushel basket], but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light.”

— Luke 11:33

Lord, give me the courage to be a brave and bold witness to you in all that I say and do.

SIGNS OF THE SEASON

The Color Purple

The liturgical color for Lent is purple, symbolizing pain, suffering, and mourning. But why purple? Purple was the most expensive color in biblical times. Extracted from a sea snail, it took as many as 12,000 shells to get enough dye to color a handkerchief. Because of the enormous cost, only the wealthiest (almost exclusively royalty) wore purple garments. When soldiers mocked Jesus for being the “King of the Jews,” they put a purple robe on his shoulders to belittle his claim. Therefore, we use the color purple during Lent to remind us of the Passion and death of the Lord.