

Second Sunday of Lent

Sermon: From the Call to Glory, Being Born Again

By Father Daniel Mafla

John 3:1–17

Dear community of Saint Paul, today the Gospel invites us to enter into an intimate conversation. It is not a public miracle nor a crowd. It is a dialogue in the night. It is the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus... and also the encounter between Jesus and our own interior life.

Nicodemus is a structured man. He has religious identity, social recognition, intellectual security. But something within him is not completely at peace. That is why he goes at night. The night represents that space where questions emerge: Who am I really? Is what I have built enough? What is missing?

We know that identity is often built on roles: profession, recognition, belonging, success, keeping rules. All of that is valuable, but it does not always touch the core of our being. And when life confronts us with a crisis, a change, a loss, a transition, those external structures can begin to shake.

Jesus does not offer Nicodemus a superficial improvement. He tells him: “You must be born again.” In existential terms, this is an invitation to a transformation of identity. It is not only about changing behaviors, but about allowing God to recreate the center from which we live.

But being born again implies letting go of something. And there attachment appears. We all cling to securities: ideas, ways of

thinking, ways of controlling reality. Attachment gives us a sense of stability, but it can also prevent growth. Fear of change is deeply human. To change means to pass through uncertainty.

Nicodemus reacts logically: “How can someone be born when they are old?” It is the voice of our inner resistance. It is the part of us that fears losing control. Anxiety arises precisely when we feel we cannot manage what is coming.

Jesus responds with the image of the wind: “The wind blows where it chooses.” The Spirit is not predictable or controllable. And here there is a spiritual key: inner health does not consist in controlling everything, but in developing resilience, that is, the ability to trust and adapt when we do not have control.

Mature faith does not eliminate uncertainty; it teaches us to live within it without despair.

Then comes the heart of the text: “For God so loved the world...”. Before the new birth, before the transformation, there is love. And this is decisive. No one can be transformed if they do not feel loved. Love is the safe space where change becomes possible.

When a person lives from shame or constant guilt, they become defensive and hardened. But when they know they are loved, they can look at their shadows without being destroyed. They can recognize their wounds without denying them. They can grow.

Jesus affirms that He did not come to condemn, but to save. Condemnation blocks; love frees. Condemnation produces fear; love generates conscious responsibility.

John speaks of light and darkness. From an interior perspective, darkness is not simply moral evil; it is everything we avoid looking at: unresolved wounds, hidden fears, insecurities, repetitive patterns. To live in the light is to dare to live in truth. It is to allow God's love to illuminate who we are, without masks.

Being born again, then, is a continuous process. It is not a one-time event. It is a constant openness to the Spirit who reshapes us. It is learning to let go of old defenses. It is growing in inner freedom.

Dear community, we all have something of Nicodemus in us. We all go through nights. We all experience moments when the old is no longer enough, but the new is not yet clear. It is an in-between space. And that space can generate anxiety... or it can become a place of encounter with God.

Dear community of Saint Paul, today the Lord reminds us that we are not called to live from fear, but from love. We are not called to cling to control, but to trust in the Spirit who blows where it chooses.

God continues to work, even when we do not understand. He continues to guide, even when the night seems long. He continues to love, even when we doubt.

Therefore, let us not be afraid to be transformed. Let us not be afraid to begin again. Let us not be afraid to walk toward the light.

God's love is greater than our doubts. His grace is stronger than our insecurities. And His Spirit continues to make all things new in us.

May the Spirit grant us the inner courage to open our hearts to the light of Christ. May we learn to trust in the wind we do not see, yet which sustains us. And may we discover that God's love is stronger than any fear we carry within.

Amen.