

Life Re-Orientation

Friends along the faith journey, the gospel story on this second Sunday in the season of Lent invites us to wonder along with the religious leader, Nicodemus, *“How can anyone be born after having grown old?”* In recent times, I found myself in a long and rigorous meeting in which a fellow religious leader shared this simple, profound reflection: *“I look for curiosity as a sign of wisdom.”* This morning, let’s join Nicodemus in a posture of curiosity, assured by how fully Jesus welcomed and embraced that curiosity.

Let’s join our spirits together in a moment of prayer, closing our eyes if it helps open our awareness to God’s steady presence. Holy Loving Spirit, we are grateful for freedom to gather this morning – on the live stream and on this land, which has been loved by First Nations and others across time and where we are now weaving our way of community. We long for you to bless us with curiosity that leads to holy re-orientation. Help us to open again and again into new life anchored in your love. We pray this as followers of our great teacher, Jesus. Amen.

“How can anyone be born after having grown old?” This is our guiding question for today. While there is the obvious meaning of birth in terms of a newborn’s arrival to the moment of their first disorienting intake of air, to be born also means to be brought forth or to cross a threshold into a new beginning. Let’s practice curiosity.

How can anyone be brought forth after having grown old? Let’s wonder:

- What gift or quality within me needs to be brought forth as a greater influence in the way I’m living?
- In what context (work, family, elsewhere) do I need to bring forth my whole self with more faith in my capacity to participate in positive ways?

How do I need to be brought forth?

How can anyone cross a threshold into a new beginning after having grown old? Let's wonder:

- Where in my life has the Spirit already been working with the tool of curiosity and I know exactly where I need to make a decisive change, crossing a threshold into a new beginning?

I have a hunch that each of us has a leaning – a recognition either in the direction of needing to bring forth a part or the whole of ourself or in the direction of needing to make a decisive new start. In my own case, I am one week into a decisive new beginning in my physical health journey.

I would welcome a conversation with each of you as you discern where in your life you most need to bring forth a part or the whole of yourself, or where you need to cross a threshold into a decisive new beginning. Please reach out to me. One-to-one confidential conversations are a great privilege of listening and reflecting within the rhythms of my weeks.

We can also look to the people of our lives (both people we've known personally and people whom we've appreciated in the public sphere). I invite you to close your eyes for a moment. Who comes to mind first when I make these statements? Maybe it will be you yourself who comes to mind.

- This is someone who has now courageously brought forth a vital part of themselves (a quality, a skill, a perspective) that they used to keep hidden. Or...
- This is someone who has courageously let go of a part of their life (a draining habit, mindset, posture, or previous commitment) in order to create space to begin something new.

I'll invite us to share glimmers of a few rebirths in a moment, but I invite you to keep your eyes closed a moment longer as some of us need more space and time to surface our role models for re-orientation (be they people we know, public figures, or ourselves).

I'll offer the prompts again as you attend to someone coming into your mind's eye:

- This person has now courageously brought forth that vital part of themselves (a quality, a skill, a perspective) that they used to keep hidden. Or...
- This person has courageously let go of that part of their life (a draining habit, mindset, posture, or previous commitment) in order to begin something new.

As we open our eyes to one another, would anyone like to name aloud the previously hidden vital quality, skill or perspective that you have witnessed someone bringing forth. Or a draining habit, mindset, posture or previous commitment of which you've witnessed someone letting go? We can be on the lookout.

Nicodemus began his movement toward re-orientation through paying attention. Appreciation of what he witnessed in Jesus' teaching and healing ministry inspired his curiosity and opened him to want to learn more, to dive deeper. Molly Baskette highlights the courage with which Nicodemus stepped forward to encounter Jesus even if he didn't feel fully ready and brave. To visit Jesus in the cover of night was the step Nicodemus could take first. If seen publicly with Jesus, he would face consequences of ridicule from fellow privileged leaders. And when Nicodemus was ready later on for a next courageous step, he would come out publicly as a supporter and follower of Jesus.

Of the Spirit's movement toward rebirth, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes.*" Jesus is speaking of being called by the Spirit.

And Molly Baskette says, *“Every once in a while, something (or someone) happens to us that forces us to confront everything we thought we knew. We awake as if from a dream.”* She speaks of a *“radical re-orientation of self to calling [that] can happen at any age.”*

And as I sat with her words this week, I was reminded of a local friend – a civic leader – who posts on their Facebook page every single day the same quote to encourage us. It has been attributed to activist Adam Eli (though the origin is not quite certain). The quote is this: *“You are allowed to say, at any point, I can't support this. Even if you did. Even if you were unsure. You can at any point say 'this has gone too far.' And while the best time to say this was earlier, the second best time is now.”* We need to be aware of our moments and opportunities for either bringing more of ourself forth or letting go of what is draining so that we can begin again.

We heard the well-known verse, John 3:16. *“God so loved the world,”* Jesus believed, that – through his life, death, and resurrection – everyone who would trust in the way Jesus was teaching and modeling would make reality that *“the world might be saved.”*

Molly Baskette invites us: *“We have to evaluate our whole lives in the wake of our waking-up. It will cost us... And yet there is no going back int the womb of the status quo.”*

With Molly, let's lean into the prayer that God's love would, in her words, *“... keep us company and give us courage as we get born again and again and again.”* God's love for the whole world (the love that saves each of us and all of us) is counting on us. Amen.

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John 3:1-17, "Mid-Life Babies"