



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

John 3:1-7,9 'Nicodemus Visits Jesus'

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³ Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above" ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?'



Our daughter and son-in-law were going to Florence, leaving their little ones with us for a week. We went to the airport and waved goodbye to the plane as it soared away up into the sky, then took our grandchildren home with us. Once we'd put them to bed that night we overheard this conversation via the baby monitor. "Sam," two-and-a-half year old Josie said to her big brother, who was 17 months her senior, "Mummy and Daddy have gone to It'ly, haven't they? Is It'ly like Botl'y?" (Botley being where they lived on the outskirts of Oxford). Sam pondered for quite a long while then, with all the superiority of his four years, solemnly pronounced, "No-o, Botl'y's on the ground". They had never been in a plane, never experienced take-off and landing, and no-one had thought to explain flying to them, so Sam assumed that Italy was somewhere 'up there'.

Lack of experience often leads to lack of understanding. In the story of Nicodemus this is his first reported encounter with Jesus, and he hasn't experienced the power of the Spirit in his life to date. Although his opening remark, "You are a teacher who has come from God," shows that the Spirit is already at

work in him, yet when Jesus says, "No-one can see the kingdom of God without being born again", Nicodemus splutters, "How can these things be?" There's a complete lack of ability to understand.

We know from Nicodemus' actions in Holy Week, when he speaks up to defend Jesus, and later helps Joseph of Arimathea to embalm Jesus's body, that despite that earlier lack of understanding, inner rebirth has indeed taken place. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus already knew God as Creator, but now in Jesus he has met the love of God in person and through the work of the Spirit he's been reborn.

Knowing about God and knowing God personally are two very different things and the second comes from our experience. Once we meet Jesus and come to know his personal love, we recognize God's hand at work in our lives. With that experience we no longer need to understand. We can commit ourselves to God, leaving things safely in his hands, and giving thanks for his overwhelming love.

Prayer: *attributed to St. Benedict (480-543)*

Almighty God, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you and life to proclaim you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.