

Going public

Notes on the Bible readings

- Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher, came to see Jesus in the dark to ask some theological questions. The implication is that he didn't want to be seen. As a Pharisee, it was a huge risk for his reputation to be seen seeking counsel from Jesus. The story reflects relationships between followers of Jesus and members of the synagogue, of which Nicodemus is a leading member.

- Jesus calls Nicodemus to respond to the risky invitation of the life-changing Spirit, to be seen in public as his follower. Jesus demonstrates that God is interested in transforming us from the inside, through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. This is the concept of being 'born again', which, Jesus indicates in verse 5, happens through immersion in the water of baptism.

- In Romans 4, Paul also describes how Abraham had faith and shared it openly, despite the consequences. Paul fastens on to Abraham's faith alone as the channel of God's blessing. It is faith in God and the presence of the Spirit within us that enable us to be transformed and change the lives of others.

- This call to respond to God's life changing Spirit within us is a challenge in today's world as it was for Abraham and Nicodemus. Are you willing to go public with your faith, to allow God's Spirit to transform your life and that of those around you? It may be risky, but Jesus promises it will be life-giving.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What risky steps have you taken in your life?
- ▶ How might other people know that you follow Jesus?
- ▶ What are the risks for you of openly being a Christian?



A prayer of approach

*O Lord, our God, the earth is full of your glory.
Let us come before your throne to worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
As you were faithful to our ancestor Abraham,
so too are you faithful to us.
Your promises never fail.
We worship and adore you. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*We pray for those who don't belong,
those on the margins of society –
the poor, the homeless, the weak, the powerless.
Open our hearts, Lord, to welcome all.
We pray for asylum seekers and refugees,
those who have no place to call home,
driven from their communities,
lives shattered by war and violence.
Open our hearts, Lord, to welcome all.
We pray for those in our workplaces or schools
who feel that they don't belong,
who seem strange to us, or us to them,
who are bullied or abused for being different –
help us to stand up for them, and for justice.
Open our hearts, Lord, to welcome all. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Lord Jesus, help me to remember
that I belong to you, and you belong to me –
through the gift of eternal life.
Amen.*

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Live your faith

Pray each day that the Spirit will prompt you to action in the name of Christ. Look for an opportunity to do something practical and public as a disciple of Christ, making a conscious choice to overcome any urge to ignore or resist the Spirit's prompting.