

March 14, 2021 Approaching the Light Homily: In one of legendary songwriter and recording artist Bob Dylan's songs, "*In the Garden*", he makes reference to a key figure in John's gospel, Nicodemus.

"Nicodemus came at night so that he wouldn't be seen by men
Saying, "Why must a man be born again?"

What do we know of this mysterious character?

By all accounts, he was a respected leader of the Jews. A teacher of the Torah and a Pharisee, he was likely a member of the supreme council, the Sanhedrin. What's significant from the point of view of the fourth evangelist is that he was a Jesus sympathizer.

Under cover of darkness, he visits Jesus. Perhaps he was afraid of losing his social standing by being seen having contact with the controversial rabbi from Nazareth. Later in the gospel, Jesus speaks of some Jewish authorities who believed in him but did not acknowledge him openly in order not to be expelled from the synagogue.

According to the eminent scripture scholar, Father Raymond Brown, darkness and night symbolize the realm of evil, untruth and ignorance in John's gospel. On the night of the Last Supper, Judas Iscariot abandons the light to go into the night of Satan. The Hour of Darkness looms. On the other hand, Nicodemus emerges from the darkness into the light. The light is Christ, "the Light of the World".

Whoever loves the truth comes to the light.

The country singer icon, Hank Williams is best remembered for a song he wrote early in his recording career, "*I Saw the Light*". It's about a man stumbling in the night, refusing to let the savior into his life. Suddenly a stranger appears: Jesus. At once the song shifts from sadness to joy. The words are poignant:

"Praise Jesus. I saw the Light. No more stumbling in the night, no more groping in the dark.
Praise Jesus. I saw the Light."

In today's gospel, the evangelist explores the knotty problem of why so many refused to put their trust in Christ. His answer is as follows: "The light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works may not be exposed".

Bad behavior does not predispose a person to accept Christ!

Many years ago, the renowned bishop, Fulton Sheen told a story about a New York stage actor he was instructing in preparation for reception into the church. The man was an egoist and often reacted sharply to the bishop's teaching. At the close of one session, Bishop Sheen informed the potential convert that he would see him again only on one condition, namely, that the man drop his mistress. His point is clear: One can't approach the light while continuing to live in darkness.

The late Mortimer Adler was an outstanding American educator and an authority on the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Doctor of the Church. Although sympathetic to the Christian faith, he nevertheless put off baptism. When asked why he refused the sacrament, Mr. Adler replied, "Well, I have been married four times". Why are so many people reluctant to embrace Christ? In all likelihood, it is because they prefer darkness to light.

Brothers and sisters, we each have been given a choice. It calls for a decision daily. Either we recognize in Christ... Light, Truth and Life or we refuse Him by preferring darkness, evil deeds and death.

"Whoever loves the truth comes to the Light." (Jn. 3:21)

As dawn approaches, let us leave the darkness behind.

Amen!