

May my words be spoken and heard in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Imagine being Nicodemus sitting alone in your comfortable house mulling over the conversations you have overheard Jesus have in the temple.

Imagine fitting together all these conversations with what you have seen Jesus do with your own eyes – the healings, the happiness of the people he touches, the difference that he makes in their lives.

Imagine coming to terms with the realisation that this man is much more than just a good man, but a man from God. Imagine trying to weigh this up with the fact that Jesus' behaviour doesn't fit into the pattern that a Pharisee would expect. Imagine your confusion. Imagine your feelings of vulnerability.

Imagine making the move to find out more. Imagine yourself getting up and walking quickly to the house where Jesus is staying.

On the way you pull your cloak around yourself as an unexpected wind begins to blow. You start to hesitate, pace up and down two, three, four times, preparing yourself to enter.

Something in the pit of your stomach tells you what you are about to do is momentous. By crossing this threshold, you step from a world where everything makes sense to one in which everything speaks of a new beginning. No wonder your hand trembles as you open the door and peer in.

How many of us at some time in our life have felt or allowed ourselves to be this vulnerable, to be open to the unknown, and be prepared to let go of our old way of life and allow ourselves to encounter something new?

I know I have on number of occasions. And especially when for some reason, I decided to jump out of a perfectly good plane. I definitely allowed myself to be vulnerable, open to the unknown and not just let go of my old way of life, but my life in general, and I definitely encounter something new that day.

The story of Nicodemus in the gospel today is, I believe, a good example of this.

Here is a man who is seeking something that is lacking in his life, for despite being a learned scholar, one of the top teachers, a Pharisee who knew his Torah inside out,

in Jesus he saw something that was definitely from God, but something that, at the same time, he was unfamiliar with.

His whole world as he knew it was becoming very disturbed. There was a shift deep within – things were being turned upside down.

What can be observed in today's Gospel is someone who is spiritually opened and curious, yet also rational. We get a sense that Nicodemus believes in Jesus and who he is for his own words are "we know you are a teacher who has come from God."

But it's like he's not ready to go public with his interest in Jesus. Yet his imagination is caught by Jesus, but he wants to compartmentalize whatever faith he has for he is not yet ready to declare his faith and not prepared to let it change his life.

One reason for this, is because despite all his knowledge as a Pharisee and his intellectual understanding about God, he doesn't get it.

He doesn't understand what Jesus is saying – he doesn't understand that openness and acceptance is required of him to come into this faith.

He doesn't understand that becoming vulnerable by letting God work in his life, will deepen his true relationship with God.

And it is this sense of being in relationship with God that is at the heart of the Gospel today.

For in John's Gospel whenever there is an encounter with Jesus, it is a salvation moment. It's a moment where we as the reader are invited to reflect on our own salvation and our relationship with God both personally and as a community.

But how do we come into this relationship, into this faith that allows us to declare it in the light of the day and be prepared to let it change our life.

It's quite simple really. Jesus said "you must be born from above, born of the Spirit." It's that easy. But what does this mean.

I believe, Jesus is inviting us, like Nicodemus to let go of our old ways of being and open ourselves up to the vulnerability of coming into a new life within the Spirit, into our trueness in him.

This can only happen though when we accept the gift of faith and have faith in the faith that God has in us. So, that we can enter into a dependable relationship with God.

For when we become truly vulnerable in our heart and accept this gift of faith from God, it evokes the Spirit of God that is within each of us, like a spring of water welling up from within. And brings us into a new birth.

This new birth sometimes happens dramatically, as in a crisis, or it can gradually happen, and sometimes we may react against it our whole life.

But to take this journey into that sacred vulnerable place within our heart where we encounter our true self in God, may scare, stretch and challenge us. It may make us tremble with the sense of the unknown, just as Nicodemus did when he opened the door.

But when we do open that door and enter that vulnerable place we encounter God who is waiting for us, who calls us into this vulnerability.

Being vulnerable doesn't mean we don't have self-worth, but that we are much stronger, for we are vulnerable in Christ, which means we are dependent not on our self, but on Christ.

And when we are dependent on our relationship with Christ we die to, and let go of our own desires, in order that we may become open to receiving God's love, which is initiated and sustained by God's faithfulness not ours.

Only then do we come into fullness of life, into faith lived wholly in the world and can step out and partake in God's mission and reflect God's love to all of humanity.

As we continue our journey through the season of Lent we are being asked to take a moment to reflect on our dependable relationship with God both personally and as a community.

May we all find a moment in our study, prayer and meditation to be still before God and invite God into that sacred vulnerable place within our heart, and reflect on

where God is calling us to be vulnerable, to be open to an encounter. So that we may continue to grow and come into a new birth and to be open to where the Spirit may choose to blow. So that we may see and experience the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven.