

**PENTECOST:  
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

**The Holy Trinity  
First Sunday after Pentecost  
June 7, 2009**

**Isaiah 6:1-8  
Psalm 29  
Romans 8:12-17  
John 3:1-17**

**To Be a Disciple Like Nicodemus**

Nicodemus is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels – only John records information about him. He is described as a leader among the Jewish religious authorities, and a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest legislative body in Jewish Palestine. He was careful to observe the law and the tradition of the elders. This was, after all, the way of salvation for a loyal Pharisee. He believed in life after death.

Nicodemus was a teacher, yet like so many of us, he had questions, wanted to learn more, desired to find truth. He knew of the “signs” that Jesus had performed. John calls them signs rather than miracles to prove that they pointed toward a truth – signs of God’s power in Christ, not just actions that defy logic.

When Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a “teacher come from God,” Jesus jumps right in, sweeps away all in which Nicodemus trusts, and demands that he be born from above. Nicodemus misses the point, questioning how one can be physically born a second time. In Greek his question makes more sense because what we have variously translated as “from above” and “again,” are derived from the same Greek word. Jesus clarifies his message – “you must” be born of water and the Spirit, with water for repentance and with the Spirit for regeneration. To be born from above is to be born of the Spirit of God. Entry into God’s Kingdom is not attained by human striving; it is something only God can effect.

This baptism plants the seed of rebirth, but it is just the beginning of our new life in Christ. As with physical life, spiritual life must be fed and strengthened, challenged, stretched, and put into daily practice if we are to grow and flourish. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that God would make all this possible. Indeed, God loved the world so much that, just as Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness for the healing of the children of Israel, God would also lift up his only Son, offering him as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, so that all who believe in him would have eternal life.

Are we disciples like Nicodemus? Do we try, but not always get the point? Do we come in safety, not risking too much at first, but with lots of questions? More importantly, when times get really difficult, have we nurtured our spiritual lives so faithfully that, like Nicodemus, we are there with our Lord at the end?

May we, like Nicodemus, passionately seek after God's Spirit in honest repentance and faith.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. Thomas R. May, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as a Director in the Global Scripture Ministries area.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Slovakia –**

With thanks to God for his mercy in helping staff to rebuild the Bible Society in Slovakia into an organization equipped to bring God's Word to their people, and with prayers for new projects, such as *Lectio Divina*, and for success in raising public awareness of the Bible Society's activities; **Czech Republic** – With thanks to God for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Czech Ecumenical Translation and with prayers for wisdom to use this occasion to spread God's Word, and with prayers for the impact of several special Scripture editions aimed at various population groups including soldiers, prisoners, and young people, and with prayers for internet and mobile phone-based Scripture services; **Poland** – With thanks to God for the good results from the *Reaching Students and Youth* project and for all who shared their knowledge, time and money for this endeavor, and with prayers for the ecumenical translation project and that all those working with the Bible will see it as a source of love and life.

**Activity Corner:** "God's Children Led by the Spirit" Poster

Supplies needed: Bible; poster board; old magazines; glue or paste; scissors; markers. Read Romans 8:12-17 and discuss what it means to be a child of God, led by God's Spirit. Talk about the blessings that are associated with being a child of God. Then read John 3:5 and discuss what it means to be "born of water and the Spirit." Across the top of the poster board copy Romans 8:14, and across the bottom copy John 3:5. Look through magazines and find pictures of children, youth, teens, and adults of all ages that depict people being "led by the Spirit." Affix these pictures to the poster board to create a montage. Conclude by singing "Kids of the Kingdom" or "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" or "Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart" or one of your favorite hymns about the Holy Spirit.

"Child of God Led by the Spirit" Card

Supplies needed: 8-1/2" x 11" construction paper (assorted colors); individual photos of each member of the household; markers or pens or pencils; glue or paste. Fold a sheet of construction paper in half. On the front, across the top, ask each one to write "Child of God Led by the Spirit" and to affix their individual photo on the cover. On the inside, copy Romans 8:14 and the first half of Romans 8:17 and then list the blessings that children of God enjoy because they are joint heirs with Christ. Use the cards throughout the week as part of family devotions, asking each one to thank God for the blessing of being a child of God.