



In this depiction of Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3, the Gospel for Trinity Sunday), we see a confident and composed Jesus speaking with authority. We also see a near-contorted old man who cannot wrap his mind around what he is hearing. Nearly despondent, you can see him trying so hard. But to no avail. He is flesh. And flesh and blood cannot inherit, let alone, comprehend, the kingdom of God. But the Spirit who proceeds from Jesus most certainly can. He teaches sinners to forsake of all natural abilities, to confess their weakness and innate corruption, and to rely instead on the strength and wisdom and righteousness of God that goes far beyond our ken. We must be born again. We must be born from above. We must become totally different persons. We must receive the birth from the Holy

Spirit who here on earth gives us a heavenly birth through the water and word of Baptism. Jesus asserts. We believe. The Church confesses. His words do not convince by appealing to our flesh, but by sending forth the Spirit who blows in the direction of the cross. There we see the venom of our sin that has so infected our fallen flesh purged and atoned for. The angst of Nicodemus above depicts the daily anguish of crucifying our reason and relying instead on the words of eternal life.

It is now the season of Trinity. From Advent all the way through the Easter season until Pentecost, we as the Church meditate on the life and work of Christ. During Trinity we focus our reflection on how God continues to work in the life of the Church and in the life of each individual Christian. Of course these two focuses obviously overlap. They must. How can we meditate on the life of Christ without reflecting on God's work in the life of the Church? And what life is there to reflect upon in us but the life that we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us? The two sides of the church year form a full coin, and it is one of great value. The first six Sundays of the Trinity Season sort of continue the celebration of Pentecost as we look at how the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify us. All this He does by the word of Christ. And so as we reflect on the life of the Church, we consider what Jesus teaches the Church. Jesus teaches the necessity of rebirth through the sacrament of Baptism (*as is depicted above*). Jesus teaches the necessity of true repentance, and assures us that those who lack worldly treasures

possess by faith a lavish and comforting inheritance that awaits us in heaven. Jesus teaches us how the Holy Spirit invites us to the richness of his kingdom by grace alone just as a king invites guests to a wedding feast. Jesus teaches us how we are to regard one another with compassion, seeking to bear the burdens especially of those of the household of faith. Jesus teaches us his gracious will to call and gather also those who are outside of the Church – to bring them in to where we are.

We learn what the Spirit of God does by listening to the Son of God. Jesus tells us the words of eternal life. They go beyond our understanding. But we see in his deeds, in his selfless self-giving on the cross the center and focus of all that He speaks and all that the Holy Spirit does.