

Lectionary Texts for May 26, 2024 • *Trinity Sunday* - Year B
Isaiah 6:1-8 • Psalm 29 • Romans 8:12-17 • John 3:1-17



John 3:1-17

Christ and Nicodemus, c. 1896, by Fritz von Uhde, German, 1848-1911

Oil on canvas, 4'7" x 5'3"

Private collection

A German painter of genre and religious subjects, Fritz von Uhde was once known as "Germany's outstanding impressionist." His father was a part-time painter, and his maternal grandfather was the director of the Royal Museums in Dresden. He found art interesting and was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, but soon left to join the army. After some 10 years in the service, he turned back to art, attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. In 1879 he

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traveled to Paris where he studied Dutch painters and took up plein-air (outdoor) painting, later becoming one of the first painters to introduce such in Germany. In about 1890 Uhde became a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and was an honorary member of the academies of Berlin, Munich, and Dresden.

In his religious paintings Uhde treated Biblical episodes realistically by transferring them to modern days, giving a symbolic message which was appreciated by many. Others criticized this approach as being vulgar or ugly. This work is a fine example of this approach to a Biblical story. Although Jesus is clothed in a more traditional manner, Uhde has placed the seated Nicodemus in his own time period by clothing him as a professional of that era, possibly a doctor, businessman, attorney, or shopkeeper. In a room with a paned window, a chandelier, and a table with open books on it, Nicodemus is gazing up as Jesus speaks to him, gesturing.

In one of Uhde's well-known paintings, *Come, Lord Jesus, Be our Guest* in the Berlin National Gallery, Christ appears among a peasant family gathering for their meal in a modern German farmhouse. Some Catholic leaders saw it as a "desecration" of Christ. An art historian wrote that Uhde's work was controversial partly because "setting episodes from the Gospels in the context of contemporary poverty ... suggested that the Christian demand of equality for all men had not been met politically or socially."

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan
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Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.

And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Romans 8:12-17

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.

When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where

it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?”

“No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”