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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Seventh Sunday of Zemene Tsom (*The Season of Lent*)

Liturgical Readings:

Romans 7:1 – 19; 1 John 4: 18- end; Acts 5: 34 -end

Psalm 16:3;

John 3:1—20

Nicodemus

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Glory to the Almighty God!

Beloved brethren in Christ, today, on this sacred day which our holy father Saint Yared named “*Nicodemus*”, we are invited to contemplate the profound encounter of Nicodemus with our Lord Jesus Christ, an encounter that reveals the mystery of spiritual rebirth and the pathway to the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a teacher of Israel, came to Christ under the veil of night, and from this darkness emerged a light that would guide him, and all who faithfully seek, into the truth of salvation.

Nicodemus was no ordinary man. He was a Pharisee, learned in the Law of Moses, and a member of the Sanhedrin, deeply versed in the Scriptures. Yet, despite his position, he recognised a hunger within his soul—an unquenchable thirst for the truth that could not be satisfied by mere scholarship or ritual. Thus, under the concealment of night, perhaps to avoid the scrutiny of his peers who opposed Jesus, he came to the Lord, saying, “*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*” (John 3:2).

Here, we see the courage of Nicodemus, a man who sought truth even at personal risk. And yet, he also illustrates a universal struggle: the difficulty of seeing spiritual realities with the eyes of the flesh, rather than the eyes of faith. Jesus responded to his earnest inquiry with words that shook the very foundations of earthly understanding: “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). At first, Nicodemus struggled with these words, for how could a man, old and wise in worldly knowledge, enter a new birth? But our Lord was revealing a truth that transcends the physical: as a man is born of flesh by his parents, so must he be born of water and the Spirit to inherit eternal life. Baptism, beloved, is not merely a ritual; it is the door through which the soul is reborn, washed of the corruption inherited from Adam, cleansed of sin, and prepared to enter the Kingdom of God.

Our Lord continued, saying, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). Here we understand the tragedy of humanity since the fall. Adam, created in the image and likeness of God, was deceived by the serpent, and sin entered the world. From him came Cain, who slew his brother Abel (John 8:44–46), illustrating that mankind, left to the guidance of the flesh, follows the counsel of the enemy. Through this fallen inheritance, all descendants of Adam were mortal, alienated from the

And yet, the Lord came, not to condemn, but to redeem. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so that those bitten might live (Numbers 21:8), so must the Son of Man be lifted up on the Cross, that whosoever believes in Him might have eternal life (John 3:14–15; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The Cross, though a symbol of curse and suffering, becomes the instrument of blessing and eternal salvation.

Jesus also revealed to Nicodemus His unique identity: not merely a teacher of Israel, but the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Saviour of the world (John 3:16–17; 3:2). Nicodemus recognised this truth, marveling at the mystery: *“Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?”* (John 3:10). He began to understand that no human wisdom, however learned, can substitute for divine revelation. To see the Kingdom of God, one must receive the Spirit; to be reborn, one must enter into baptism.

Nicodemus’s faith deepened over time. On the day of the Crucifixion, when the other Jewish leaders opposed Jesus, Nicodemus came forward, courageous in faith, and went to Pontius Pilate to request the body of Christ for burial (John 19:38). This action revealed a heart touched by the truth, a soul transformed by the teaching of the Lord. Throughout the ministry of Christ, Nicodemus supported the Saviour discreetly, standing apart from those who opposed Him, quietly aligning himself with righteousness and divine truth.

Dear faithful, the lesson here is clear: the journey of Nicodemus teaches us the necessity of spiritual rebirth. To inherit the Kingdom of God, man must pass from death to life, from corruption to grace, through water and the Spirit. Just as no man can enter the world without being born of his parents, so no one can enter God’s eternal Kingdom without being born anew through baptism. Adam’s sin brought mortality and alienation; Christ’s sacrifice and the waters of baptism bring life and eternal communion with God.

In summary, let us learn from Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth is indispensable. Faith must be awakened; the soul must be renewed; and the Cross, though once a curse, becomes the source of blessing and salvation. May each of us approach Christ with the earnestness of Nicodemus, seeking in the night of our ignorance the light of His truth, and receiving through baptism the grace to enter the Kingdom of God.

Glory be to the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.