

Born from Above, formed by the Cross, Living as One

(cf. John 3:7–15; Acts 4:32–37)



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a tension within every human heart. We long for renewal, yet we often resist the very grace that can transform us. We pray for new life, yet cling to habits, fears, and attachments that keep us from becoming the people God created us to be. Into this tension, Jesus speaks with clarity and urgency: **“You must be born from above”** (John 3:7). These words are not merely an invitation; they reveal a necessity. Without this new birth in the Spirit, we cannot fully enter the life God desires for us.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of night (cf. John 3:2). He is sincere, searching, and open to the truth, yet he has not fully surrendered himself to it. His darkness is not merely the darkness of evening; it is the darkness of uncertainty, hesitation, and incomplete faith.

In many ways, Nicodemus represents each of us. We remain in the night whenever faith becomes routine rather than relationship, whenever we seek God without surrendering to Him, whenever we keep portions of our lives closed to His transforming grace. We may profess belief in Christ and yet resist the conversion He desires to accomplish within us.

Jesus then speaks of the Holy Spirit: **“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes”** (John 3:8). The Spirit of God is never content to leave us where we are. He calls us beyond complacency. He challenges our attachments. He invites us to trust beyond what we can control. Yet how often do we resist Him?

We choose what is comfortable over what is true. We cling to our plans rather than entrust ourselves to God’s providence. We seek a faith that accommodates our preferences rather than a faith that transforms our hearts.

Still, the Lord never ceases to call us forward. Jesus directs our gaze to the mystery at the center of our salvation: **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up”** (John 3:14). The Cross stands at the heart of the Christian life. It reveals not merely suffering, but love poured out completely for the salvation of the world. Upon the Cross, Christ holds nothing back. He gives Himself entirely.

We speak often of love yet hesitate before sacrifice. We desire resurrection yet resist dying to ourselves. We long for holiness yet avoid the surrender that holiness requires. But the Gospel teaches us a profound truth: **What is not surrendered cannot be transformed. What is not offered to God cannot be raised by His grace.**

Faith is not simply admiration of the Cross; it is participation in the mystery of the Cross. To believe in Christ is to entrust ourselves to Him completely, confident that whatever is placed into His hands will be redeemed and made new.

The fruit of such surrender is revealed in the life of the early Church. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that: **“The community of believers was of one heart and one soul”** (Acts 4:32). This unity was not the result of convenience or human agreement. It was the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling within hearts transformed by Christ.

Because they belonged entirely to the Lord, they belonged fully to one another. Indeed, Scripture tells us: **“There was not a needy person among them”** (Acts 4:34). What a remarkable witness.

The first Christians understood that discipleship could not remain a private matter. Their love for Christ became visible in their love for one another. Their faith expressed itself in generosity, compassion, and concrete acts of charity.

Among them stood Barnabas, who sold a field and laid the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles (Acts 4:36–37). He did not calculate the cost. He did not postpone obedience. He trusted God and gave generously. Barnabas reminds us of what a life shaped by the Holy Spirit looks like. His example also invites us to examine our own hearts. Where do we still cling to possessions, recognition, comfort, or control? Where do we hesitate to trust God completely? What prevents us from giving ourselves more fully to the Lord and to one another?

The Gospel poses a question that each of us must answer: **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”** (Matthew 6:21). Where is our treasure? Is it in worldly security, or in the Kingdom of God? Is it in comfort, or in discipleship? Is it in ourselves, or in Christ?

The Lord’s invitation remains before us: **“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me”** (Luke 9:23). Daily—not occasionally. Daily—in our homes, our workplaces, our parish, our relationships, and our service to others. Daily—in acts of forgiveness, generosity, humility, and self-giving love. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us not remain in the night.

Let us step into the light of Christ. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish within us that we cannot accomplish on our own. Let us bring to the Lord every attachment, every fear, every wound, and every resistance, trusting that His grace is greater than our weakness.

If we do so, we will become what the Church is called to be: a people reborn by the Spirit, formed by the Cross, united in charity, and radiant with the life of the Risen Christ. And then the world will not merely hear that Christ is alive—it will encounter His living presence in us.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, accompany us on this journey of conversion. May she teach us to say “yes” to God’s grace with trust and generosity. And may the Holy Spirit renew our hearts, our families, and our parish, so that together we may become one heart and one soul in Christ.

With prayerful best wishes and every blessing, I remain

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Vilaire Philius
Pastor