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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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“How can one grown old be born again?” (John 3:3).

Acts 4:23-41; John 3:1-8

Bob Dylan's 1962 song, "Blowin' in the Wind" became a kind of anthem for the generation of the 1960s seeking social change. Its lyrics voiced the cry of the oppressed and their longing for answers that remain elusive, "blowing in the wind."

Jesus uses this same metaphor to try to explain to Nicodemus the mystery of faith, which requires a deep personal transformation to perceive things in a new way. With an even more compelling metaphor, Jesus tells him that he must be "born again" to understand how God is working in his life and in the world.

Nicodemus is on the edge of faith, but still in the dark about how this transformation might occur. He comes at night to talk with Jesus for fear of being seen. Though he is open and highly educated, he does not understand how an adult can be born again. Their heartfelt conversation is the beginning of a long process of conversion that will end with Nicodemus joining Joseph of Arimathea to bury Jesus after his crucifixion.

We think of this encounter early in the Gospel as occurring before Jesus' death and resurrection, but because the fourth Gospel was composed later, everything we read is really post-resurrection, told in the light of Jesus already revealed in glory. This story may have been an appeal to other Pharisees to join the early church.

Easter faith, as we see in all the scripture readings of this Easter season, does require a rebirth in mind and heart, a different way of seeing everything. Jesus was transformed by his death and resurrection, and we must be transformed as well to grasp the implications of this in our own lives. We must have ears that can hear the cry of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. We must learn to listen to the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing through our world and in our own hearts. Without rebirth we will remain deaf to God's Word and walking in the dark.

Nicodemus, like Jesus' own disciple Thomas, was slow to come to faith, but he was sincere in his openness and longed to understand a mystery that had touched his heart and troubled his mind. He kept seeking until he found the truth. Easter faith is not a light switch suddenly flipped on but a process of asking God to send the Spirit to breathe new understanding into us. Many of us who first heard Bob Dylan's song back in 1962 are now old and often we find change difficult. We, too, need to be reborn. Yet, God always hears our prayer for the Holy Spirit and so, even for us, the answers are still blowing in the wind.

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