

**Life Begotten from Above**      Second Week of Easter      Monday, April 29, 2019      Acts 4:23-31;    **Jn 3:1-8**    **St. Catherine of Siena**, virgin and Doctor of the Church    (The goal of contemplation is to become more conscious of the new life and less conscious of the old one.)

**“Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born from above.’”**

Now this particular reading is, in a way, a pun; it’s a pun because the word in Greek *anothan* means “from above” or “again.” **Jesus is saying you must be born from above from the Holy Spirit**, and Nicodemus misunderstands and says, well, how could you be born again? Well oddly, this has become a big issue with certain Christians who call themselves “born again,” which is not the correct understanding; it really is about being born from above, begotten anew. So the idea of “born again” is a mistake. It’s amazing that it’s become the sort of slogan of a certain group of Christians. But then **many Christians do not understand Scripture**, even those who call themselves “Bible believers.”

If you go to St. Augustine, for example, St. Augustine observes that God throughout eternity, which of course has no duration, this is a way we have of speaking about what we can’t understand, but **in eternity there’s no past, there’s no future; there’s just an ever present moment and in that ever present moment God is begetting himself**. This is, I believe he calls it, **an eternal procession**. So God is always begetting himself in eternity.

Now time only starts with the creation. How old is the creation? 13.7 billion years. Before that creation started there was no time. This is hard for us to grasp, but I believe it’s true. **Now what time allows God to do is to beget himself in time, and not only once, but as often as human beings avail themselves of this.**

Now Jesus was born in the flesh but not by the flesh. He was born because the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary, and he who is an eternal Son of God took human flesh in time. **So Jesus was never “born again” because he was born only once.** But he was, is, and will be

eternally begotten; and once he was begotten in time in the womb of the Virgin Mary. **All ordinary human beings** are begotten by the flesh and in the flesh, but they **have the opportunity to be born from above**, therefore again, a second time, by the power of the Holy Spirit, **whereby the very same thing that happened in the Blessed Mother happens in our own souls**. And we indeed become the birthplace of the Son of God, or another way of saying this is **we actually become a true child of God the Father at this moment**.

And that is the meaning of Baptism, which is born of water and Spirit; water and Spirit is Baptism. That's what **Baptism affords us: a new kind of life, but no longer the life of our own individual identity**. Now it's a new life as a member of Christ, in which we are all **interdependent**, belonging to one another in this new life, of which we are very faintly conscious. **The goal of contemplation is to become more conscious of the new life and less conscious of the old one**. This is called **dying to self**, letting go of one's own ego, letting down the boundaries of the ego, letting go of like and dislike, letting go of identification with one's body and one's feelings and one's thoughts and even one's accomplishments and failures, so that one can become more aware of the child of God that we are created to be.

This is the life that **St. Catherine of Siena** pursued with such vigor and enthusiasm, and the result was a life of tremendous service to the poor and to the sick in Siena during the plague, where **she risked her own life, which she no longer identified with, in order to serve God's people who were suffering**. This is simply one example of the life that is begotten from above.