

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 John 5:4-10; John 20:19-31

### The Wounds of Jesus

The other day, I'm not sure why—I'm guessing because of the lessons he'd heard during Holy Week—Nicholas asked his mother why Jesus' wounds hadn't healed after the resurrection. He told her that when she went to heaven, she'd have to send some sort of message back to let him know if Jesus' wounds had healed by now.

Do you ever think about that? Why did Jesus' wounds remain after His resurrection? Shouldn't He have wanted to be done with them, to put them behind Him? Isn't that what we like to do with suffering and the hard times in life: put them behind us. So why does Jesus still have wounds to show Thomas, for Thomas to put His hand or fingers into? Weren't those wounds painful reminders of the torment Jesus has suffered, even, perhaps, of weakness?

No, nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus wounds were not and are not signs of weakness, but of strength. Remember, no one took His life from Him, but the Good Shepherd laid down of His own accord for His sheep. His love held Him to the cross much more securely than nails—His love for you and for me. And those wounds, those sweet, blessed wounds, are not only signs of the torment He endured for our salvation, but they are indeed trophies of His love and His victory over death and the grave, our death and our grave.

Why do paintings of our Lord and statues of Him, like the one we have on the altar, so often depict Him with His wounds still visible and even prevalent? Because those wounds are preachments. Those wounds are reminders to us of the heavy cost of sin—a cost so great only God's blood could pay it—and also of the unfathomable breadth of God's love, so that when with His breath the Church receives power to forgive and withhold forgiveness we dare never forget where that forgiveness has come from: through water, blood, and Spirit; through His cross and empty tomb; through Baptism into His death and resurrection and through Communion in His Blood, all through the power of the Spirit active in Word and Sacrament.

I mentioned in the sunrise service on Easter that I sometimes feel sorry for Thomas, forever known as "Doubting Thomas" since the incident in our Holy Gospel. Here is a man who left everything to follow Jesus, who followed Him through His earthly ministry and then for the rest of His life after this day. Here is a man who took the gospel throughout the known world as an Apostle, even so far as India, some claim. Here is a man who by all accounts was martyred for his preaching of the gospel, according to tradition pierced through by spears, suffering his own wounds for Jesus. Yet here is a man who is remembered as "Doubting Thomas." Hardly seems fair, does it?

I don't think he minds, though, because for those of us familiar with the Gospels, that name reminds us not only of Thomas' doubt, but also of the forgiveness he found as Jesus pointed Him to His wounds. And isn't that what we constantly need, forgiveness and reassurance from the Lord? And isn't that the same place we must find it, in the wounds of our Lord Jesus? It is, after all, in those wounds that we find refuge in Holy Baptism, to those wounds that we are pointed in faithful preaching, and it is blood of the same Jesus from whom blood flowed from those wounds on Calvary that we partake of in the cup of thanksgiving of the Lord's Supper.

What did Jesus come to bring? He tells His disciples: peace. Peace with God. The forgiveness of sins and life everlasting in a world without sorrow, suffering, or death. ***"Peace be with you,"*** He says. And He isn't joking. In the midst of everything but peace, when life is

anything but peaceful, step back, consider again His wounds, let them be your sanctuary, and breath in again His peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Thomas was deeply moved by His encounter with the Lord and by His wounds. **“My Lord and my God!”** He confessed. See in Jesus the same: your Lord, that is, your Savior, and your God, the One who is able to keep every promise and work all things for good.

**“Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”** But how shall we believe? Thomas was able to see Jesus. How shall we meet Him? What does St. John write next? Why has he written this Gospel of our Lord? **“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”**

Thomas may be “Doubting Thomas” to this day, despite all the work He did for the Lord before and after this incident, despite even his martyrdom, but that doubt did not define him. No, doubt forgiven defined Him. Doubt forgiven freed Him from the trap of despair and doubt forgiven sent Him forth a new creation to declare the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the known world. Similarly, do not let your sin define you. No, let your sin forgiven define you. Leave your sin with Thomas’ in the upper room and go forth new men, new women, for in this word of St. John, in all the Word and in the Sacraments, you have your encounter with Jesus, and He is the Jesus with wounds in His hands, feet, and side, wounds inflicted through crucifixion, yet wounds, like His cross, that for the Christian are not memories to forget, but rather trophies to display, trophies of God’s love, of the sinner’s salvation, of doubt dispelled and mercy proven.

*Jesus, grant that balmand healing  
In Your holy wounds I find,  
Ev’ry hour that I am feeling  
Pains of body and of mind.  
Should some evil though within  
Tempt my treach’rous heart to sin,  
Shouw the peril, and from sinning,  
Keep me from its first beginning.*

*Should some lust or sharp temptation  
Fascinate my sinful mind,  
Let me think about Your passion,  
And new courage I shall find.  
Or should Satan press me hard,  
Let me then be on my guard,  
Saying, “Christ for me was wounded,”  
That my tempter flee counfounded. Amen.*

(CW 121, *Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing*, verses 1,2)