

## Bishop's reflection – Divine Mercy Sunday

“What’s good for the goose is good for the gander,” at least that’s what Thomas believes. For, just as his fellow “disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord” when “he showed them his hands and his side,” so Thomas is asking for similar considerations to satisfy his own fears and doubts.

In satisfying Thomas’ request, Jesus also turns towards us. “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Just like Thomas, each successive generation of believers is going to make a similar request. Many will come to believe on the evidence of those who have come before them, many others will not be satisfied unless their faith has a grounding in their own experience of Jesus’ wounds.

This is the role of martyrs in the life of the Church and the role of the Church as martyr in times of difficulty. Not the self-inflicted martyrdom that is inflicted on the Church for her own sinfulness, but the patient endurance and suffering that bears witness to her unity with Christ’s mission as healer, reconciler, peacemaker, teacher and saviour. The wounds we bear, with patience and with love, for the sake of others and their well-being are harbingers of joy and hope for all who come to believe in the greater good of the wounded Christ Risen from the dead.

Is it any wonder that most peoples and nations first accepted the faith by means of the witness of martyrs, who were willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the people and the faith that they brought? A veritable “cloud of witnesses”, in each epoch and each land, not excluding today. We have seen the mark of the nails, the wound in his side, and continue to see them in the sacrifices of others each day. It is in these glorious wounds that we rejoice and attest to our belief in Christ as “(my) Lord and (my) God”.

These self-same wounds shine forth daily in the gift of the Eucharist, gift to his Church. “Take, eat, this is my body broken for you.” “Take, drink, this is my blood of the New Covenant poured out for you.” Just as he asks us to eat and asks us to drink, so we, in our own way, place our fingers in the holes of the nails and our hand in his side. Each time we come to Mass, therefore, we are invited to touch his wounds, the wounds of his love, so that we can re-confirm and proclaim, in Thomas’ words, “my Lord and my God”.