

Bishop's Reflection -- Divine Mercy Sunday

We are all familiar with the wounds of love. They are the calloused hands of a person making a living by the sweat of their brow, the baggy eyes of a parent attentive to the problems of his/her children, the wrinkles of concern that form over years of caring, the stretch marks of giving birth, and the grey hair that graces our foreheads after years of a life given for others. In many ways, they are the features by which we are known; they are no more separate from us than the nail marks in Jesus' hands and feet and the wound in his side.

I have often wondered if the wounds we have borne in this life will be identifiable in our glorified state. Will our bodies revert back to some earlier rendition of ourselves, or will they retain the sufferings we endured? We know the answer to this question in Jesus' case. Far from losing his wounds in his glorified body, they are the very thing that serves to identify him. Would I even recognize my mom without the wounds of age and love? Even now, I scarcely recognize pictures of her younger self.

Jesus made himself known by his glorious wounds, first to the ten Apostles and then to Thomas himself. For, as John recounts, it is only after Jesus showed them his hands, feet and side, that the Apostles recognized him for who he was. Even today, Jesus comes and presents himself in his woundedness, in the form of those we serve, under the guise of a Church wounded by her own sin and in His Body and Blood at the heart of our life together. Not only are we called to touch and enter into the wounds of Christ in the Eucharist, receiving from him the gift which he intended for our salvation, but we are called to bind the wounds due to sin through the gift of His Spirit and the forgiveness of sins.

"Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." From its very foundation, the Church is called to be a field hospital for the wounded and those who are lame. Binding one another's wounds, we tire at times; enduring our share of wounds in the process, this is part of who we are called to be. The Church is a field hospital in the midst of the battle, not caught up with her own glory, but with the mission of Christ in the world.

"Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Jesus' instructions to Thomas are intended for us as well. Though we may be reluctant to put the little faith we have into action, it is essential that we do. It is only through our engagement with his wounds, the wounds of the world and our own wounds too, that faith springs from doubt, hope from despair and love from apathy.

"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus speaks directly to us, addressing those whose faith sprouts from Thomas' proclamation of faith. In choosing to believe we form one body, in tending one another's wounds we are open to his healing, and in strengthening one another in faith, hope and love we are witnesses to Christ presence among us.