

## 041110 WOUNDS AND SCARS (By his wounds we were healed.)

The year is 1645 and the place is Paris. The scene is the Jesuit Provincialate and the time is early morning. The Jesuit community has begun to gather for early morning Mass. The Provincial is to be the celebrant. Into the sacristy runs the porter, the Jesuit brother who has responsibility for answering the door and admitting people into the Provincialate. He hurries over to the Superior and whispers that there is a beggar in the front parlor who claims to have news of the French Jesuits in Canada and North America. The provincial says that Mass is almost ready to begin and he will see the man afterwards. But then he thinks to himself that it may be urgent and decides to take off his vestments and go to the parlor. In the dim morning light he sees a man in ragged dress, a gaunt figure. The Provincial asks if the man actually has news of the French Jesuits. He does. “Do you know Father DeBrebeuf?” “I do.” “Do you know of Father Isaac Jogues?” “I know him well.” “Is he alive?” “The man who stands before you and is speaking to you—he is Isaac Jogues.” The Provincial was stunned. Although he knew Jogues well and had sent him to the North American missions he clearly did not even recognize the fellow Jesuit who now stood in his presence.

There was great rejoicing in the community but great empathy as it became clear the degree and the nature of the sufferings this priest had undergone to bring the message of the gospel to the New World. He had been kidnapped, tortured, mutilated. He had had fingers cut off and chewed off. He had lost a dangerous amount of weight. And yet Jogues said almost immediately that once he regained his strength he was to return to complete his mission. He actually did so only to be martyred two years later with a tomahawk blow to the head by an Iroquois warrior. Isaac Jogues and his companions all gave their lives, all received many wounds to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I submit to you that you cannot live the way of Jesus in this world without being wounded for doing so. We all have wounds. Some are inflicted upon us by others or by life; some we inflict upon ourselves by our selfishness or shortsightedness or sin. It is not so much the wounds as what we do with the wounds that matters the most. Take just three of the apostles whom Jesus chose as part of the original twelve. Judas, Peter, Thomas.

Judas is initially attracted to our Lord and decides to hitch his wagon to this rising star of a miracle worker. He grows disillusioned after a time and falls back into petty habits of theft. He makes a bold but foolhardy decision to conspire with the religious authorities to hand Jesus over and accepts thirty pieces of silver as his finder’s fee. In short order as the events of Good Friday unfold Judas realizes what he has done and has such deep remorse. He is filled with regret and although he has been a personal witness to the many times Jesus offered forgiveness to people—the woman caught in adultery, Zaccheus the tax collector, the paralyzed young man—he does not believe that he can be forgiven. No, in his own mind, his own sin is too big for the Lord to forgive. He gives into despair and allows his self-loathing to lead him to suicide. Judas has wounds and is crushed by them but goes to his death clutching his wounds to himself.

Peter is the chief apostle and a natural leader. He professes his willingness to die for Jesus and the same night publicly disavows even knowing Jesus. He does this over and over again. Then, the cock crows and in the gospel of Saint Luke, it says that when the cock crowed Jesus turned and looked at Peter. That means that Our Lord could

actually hear the denials of his foremost apostle. The Scriptures say that he went out and wept bitterly. Tradition says that there were small furrows cut in his face from those tears for the rest of his life. How could Peter have done such a thing? How could he ever make it up to Jesus? Soon it would be too late. Soon he would die on the cross. But after the resurrection Jesus will appear to Peter several times and the last time he will ask Peter if he loves him. When Peter makes his profession of love Jesus reminds him to feed the sheep. Three times. Peter has wounds. Self-inflicted wounds. He is unable to heal them on his own. But Christ's power and Christ's acceptance of his profession of love is enough to reconstitute Peter as a disciple

Thomas, nicknamed the twin, perhaps because he physically resembled Jesus or resembled him in temperament or demeanor, runs away like the others in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thomas retreats into himself. He sees Jesus die on the cross but observes only from a distance. When the others gather together that Sunday night, Thomas will not be with them. As a result he does not have the same experience of the risen Lord that they have. Of course, they can't wait to tell him but he is having none of it. He is from Missouri, the Show Me state. He will need to touch and probe before he believes. But the others prevail upon him to join with them again and in doing so he has the same experience they have. It is in gathering with others who believe that we experience the presence of the risen Christ—not so much in solitariness and isolation.

Thomas and Peter had wounds but their wounds are able to be healed and they are able to receive forgiveness for these self-inflicted wounds and their scars will mark the site of their healing. All three apostles are wounded. All sinned grievously. Two allow themselves to be drawn back to Jesus; one refuses and dies that way—in regret. All had wounds from their own sin. Each was isolated by the sin they had committed. Two believed that, as bad as their sin was, Christ's love was the only healing balm. One did not so believe.

They are not the only wounded ones. Nor are we. Look at the crucified one. He truly knows our pain. He has endured it with us and endured it for us. Jesus is God with wounds. Jesus is a God with scars. What Isaiah the prophet says is: "By his wounds we are healed." His scars are our salvation. But what about your scars? What about the effect of your own sinfulness. Are you more likely to hold yourself away like Judas or to own your deepest flaws and ask mercy like Peter and Thomas?

Today is Divine mercy Sunday. Back in the 1930's Our Lord appeared to a young Polish nun named Faustina. He revealed to her that he was the Divine Mercy and that she was to spend her life making the Divine Mercy of God known to the world. And so she has. Her diaries of her interaction with Christ are amazing to read. But there is one point when the Lord castigates her for holding back from him. She is upset and declares that she has never held anything back from the Lord, offering all of herself. She asks what she has withheld from him. He answers that she has withheld her ugliness, her sinfulness, her failures. Jesus says that he does not want her to give him only the best of herself or the best of what she is capable but he asks for all, the good, the bad and the ugly. Why? Because only he can transform the bad and the ugly. And if she holds it back none of it can be transformed. Jesus bids her—and us—to give him everything of ourselves. Give all to his merciful heart. Seek the Divine Mercy which alone can heal the wounds and scars of this life. Sister Faustina was taught to pray, "Jesus, I trust in

you." Dare to believe in that simple prayer and the power unleashed in the depth of Christ's mercy. Bring others to believe it too.