

Second Sunday of Easter, Year B
April 15, 2012

Acts 4:32-24
1 John 5:1-6
John 20:19-31

“Put Your Hands Into My Wounds”

The absolutely unbelievable had happened, and the disciples were in shock. How could anyone, especially someone who had suffered such a horrible death come back from the realm of the dead? Yes, they had seen Jesus raise several people from the dead, but they, Jairus' little daughter, the widow's son at Naim, and Jesus' friend Lazarus had been restored to a very ordinary life, no different than the one they had lived before. Lazarus, together with Martha and Mary, even gave a banquet in his honor. Jairus' daughter returned to playing with her playmates playing the games the girls and boys played in those days, and the widow's son and Lazarus took up again the occupations by which they earned their bread before they became ill.

But Jesus' case was different. First, there was the empty tomb and the vision of angels. Then he couldn't be found. Next Jesus appeared to different people of their company suddenly, without warning, and just as suddenly disappeared. Locked doors and walls no longer hindered him. They thought he was a ghost, but he went to great pains to show them it was he, Jesus, flesh and blood, the same they had known intimately for these last three years. Jesus also seemed more relaxed in their presence. The mission for which he was sent was completed, that mission which brought about his suffering and death. It was obvious that he had entered another dimension, the dimension of the kingdom, the presence of which they heard him speak about, but with which they had no direct experience until now. The shock they felt and the revolution it caused in their lives runs all throughout the gospel accounts. Jesus appears unexpectedly, chides them for not believing the witness of their eyes, the promises of the prophets, and his own teaching. “They were incredulous for sheer joy,” says it all. They were being torn apart by a storm of emotions: first of all in that inexpressible joy at seeing their beloved Rabboni standing before them, and yet not daring to believe in the witness of their eyes, their ears, and their sense of touch. How could someone who did not experience him directly believe their excited jabbering?

The French have a saying, “God often visits us but most of the time we are not at home.” Thomas was not at home either on the evening of that first day of the week when the Lord appeared to the others gathered in the upper room. They tried to convince him, but he was broken by the events of Good Friday. His dreams of following the long awaited Messiah had been crushed and his disillusionment had made him angry and bitter. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Thomas is everyman. His journey to faith in the Lord is our journey to faith also through moments of doubt and confusion which may weaken or even destroy our trust in God. It is no different from our anger and lack of faith when our life is broken by a failed marriage, a death in the family, or a loss of a

job. But Jesus respected Thomas' honesty and the crisis in which he found himself, and met him at the very point of his doubt. Jesus meets us also at our moments of crisis and despair, and when we respond by touching Jesus' wounds in faith; we are healed and made strong.¹ "By his stripes, by his wounds, we are healed."

The disciples were invited to look at Jesus' wounds on that first Eater evening and Thomas was later invited to probe them. So we too are invited to see, contemplate and probe these same wounds, for the Gospels are written for us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

It is through the wounds of the crucified and risen Christ that the world has been redeemed and we are made children of God. It is the wounds of the crucified and risen Christ that communicate divine life because they are the wounds of divine love made manifest in the Incarnate Word. They are the gates of not only eternal life, but of an eternally glorious and joyful life. We too are called to rise with Jesus, to be transfigured with him, deified, as the Eastern Church put it.

It is through the wounds of Christ that we become aware of the woundedness of others and become agents of divine healing and wholeness. We are called to continue the ministry of Christ. We cannot do this with our own love, but through the wounds of Christ we become channels of God's love and healing to those around us and to the world.

Today is also called Divine Mercy Sunday, which in a particular fashion proclaims God's great love and mercy to us. The image associated with it is that of the risen Christ, hands held aloft in blessing and streams of light pouring from his wounded side. It calls us to a trust in that same divine mercy which out of love for us brought down the Word to become one of us, suffer and die for us. It teaches us to rely on that love in the midst of our joys and difficulties; it is the same love that once drew the disillusioned Thomas to his side to heal him, to number him with the other disciples as his witness not only of his resurrection but especially of his love. And it now draws us into the same mystery of that love.

Fr. Boniface Von Nell

¹..Desmond Knowles, *Voicing A Thought on Sundays* (Dublin, Columbia Press,, 1991)