

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
24th April 2022 - 2nd Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday

(Year C): 1st: Acts 5:12-16. 37-43. Psalm: 117. 2nd: Apocalypse 1:9-13. 17-19. Gospel: John 20:19-31.

Wounds are something that we all receive at some time during our lives. We can receive them through surgery, even in the process of giving birth. People can be injured in accidents on building sites, doing agricultural work, in a factory, or in sports or hobbies. As well as physical wounds, life can wound our moral and spiritual side too. Children treated cruelly can grow up with deeply wounded personalities. Someone treated with contempt or disdain by a loved one can be badly hurt. We often talk about broken hearts in reference to love affairs that have gone wrong. Cardinal Richelieu, the famous 17th cent. French statesman, thought that wounds inflicted by the sword heal more easily than those inflicted by the tongue.

There can also be a certain pride in wounds. One Roman poet wrote that a soldier lists his wounds like a shepherd counts his sheep. There is the famous speech in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, when King Henry imagines the veteran of the battle of *Agincourt* boasting of his wounds: "Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars and say, 'these wounds I had on Crispin's day.'" Wounds and scars can be a sign that we have really lived, and suffered, and have experienced the harder side of life. We speak of being 'battle scarred' at times during life.

As Christians we believe that the whole human race is wounded in quite a drastic way. We are all born wounded by the effects of original sin. We are still basically good, having been created by God, but our minds, wills and hearts are impaired. It was to repair the damage, and to raise us up to share his divine life that Jesus came.

Wounds are central to today's gospel reading. We may refer to Thomas as doubting, but he does have a point. He believes that the other apostles have seen something, but he is not sure that it is the real Christ. As we know from other gospel appearances they didn't always recognise him at first. What makes Christ real for Thomas is the reality of his suffering, represented by his wounds. The authentic risen Christ, for Thomas, must still bear the marks of his real earthly life, a life marked by suffering as well as by miracles and joy.

Thomas is worried they may be imagining a false Christ untouched by earthly reality, especially the reality of his terrible death. It does matter, as a Jesus unmarked by suffering, who has not confronted sin and death is not the real Christ. Jesus retains the wounds humanity inflicted on him, precisely to remind us what we are capable of, and show how much he loves us.

The wound in the side of Jesus is the entry into his heart. O sacred Heart. His wounds become the source of our healing. The blood and water that flowed from his side became "the fountain of sacramental life in the Church." Jesus' wounds are also a powerful witness to the continuity between his earthly body and his risen, glorious body. The Good Friday Liturgy opens with Isaiah 53, the Suffering Servant song, which says 'Yet he was pierced through for our faults.' (v 5)

On the cross Jesus quotes from Psalm 21/22. 'My God my God, why have you forsaken me, which also includes the verse 'They tear holes in my hands and my feet.' (v.17)

Zechariah, (12: 10) speaking of the deliverance and restoration of Jerusalem says "They will look on the one whom they have pierced." which St John quotes in his Passion narrative (19:37)

All that all picked up in Charles Wesley's hymn 'Lo he comes: which has the beautiful verse: 'Those dear tokens of his passion, still his dazzling body bears, cause of endless exultation to his ransomed worshippers: with what rapture gaze we on those glorious scars!

They drew from Thomas the highest act of faith of anyone that we can make our own, MY LORD AND MY GOD.