

2nd Sunday of Easter “Blessed by a Wounded Hand”

Fr. Frank Schuster

I am an executor for the estate of a priest and pastor of the Archdiocese of Seattle. I am sure a few of you remember him. His name was Fr. John Renggli. He was a wonderful man. When I was first ordained, he welcomed me into a Jesu Caritas group. For those of you who do not know, this is essentially a small prayer group where priests gather once a month to complain about our parishioners. But not John. That was the thing about John. He never complained. Quite the contrary, when it was his turn to share, it was always filled with stories of how he was touched by the goodness of all the people in his life. He was stubborn that way. As hard as we tried to tempt him to the dark side, he stayed firmly in the light. Over time, his health issues compounded to the point where he needed to give up his car, independence and live out his days in a nursing facility. I don't know about you, but that would make me extremely grumpy. But, not John. The last time our Jesu Caritas group met with him before he passed away, he was all smiles, and even gave us a blessing. As he raised his hand to do so, you could see wounds and bruises all down his arm that were the result of old age, diabetes, and the constant need for medical care. But, even with his wounds, he was still a healer. Even though he was dying, he was still a priest.

In the Gospel today, Jesus showed his wounds to Thomas. Now Thomas is an apostle and saint that many of us can relate with. Thomas said, “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.” We can all relate with that. At times, all of us have had our doubts. Perhaps, more than a few people this weekend come with hurts and doubts. What was Jesus' remedy for Thomas? Jesus gave Thomas his wounds, his glorified wounds. And then Thomas, in awe, proclaimed, “My Lord and my God”.

A takeaway from our Gospel reading is that the Risen Lord can transform our wounds into glorified wounds, holy wounds, which can become a source of strength and healing to others. We all know people like that. Who are these people in your life? We all want to be like them. They demonstrate to us that through a relationship with Jesus, we can gain strength from the illnesses that inflict us, or accidents that befall us, or even injustices committed against us, as much as we can learn from our own mistakes. Our transformed wounds can then become a source of strength and motivation, giving hope and healing to others. We can give hope and healing to others when we let Jesus transform our wounds into his glorified wounds.

And so, it is appropriate that today is also Divine Mercy Sunday. St. Faustina had a vision of the Risen Lord which we have on display. In St. Faustina's diary about the origin of this feast day, Jesus told her “...tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially poor sinners...Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.... Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy”. (Diary 699)

Under the image is St. Faustina's prayer that I believe we should all pray when we have doubts or hurts. Jesus I trust in you. Jesus I trust in you. I don't know where my life is going. Jesus I trust in you. I may be handicapped by illness, but Jesus I trust in you. I may be racked with sinfulness, but Jesus I trust in you. I may be wounded by the sins of others, Jesus I trust in you. My life may seem like it is crumbling all around me, but Jesus I trust in you. At the end of the day, we need to simply trust that Jesus knows what he is doing and won't let us be lost forever, if we just simply trust.

My friends, what are your wounds? Think about it for a moment, what are your wounds? Now can you trust your wounds to Jesus? Ask yourself that, can you trust your wounds to Jesus? This Sunday, the invitation is to let Christ's Body and Blood become one with our body and blood. Let Jesus' wounds transform our wounds. And, as Church, let us pray over and over again, Jesus I trust in you.