

A Sermon Preached by
Fr. Ralph Osborne for the Second Sunday of Easter, Year C
April 11, 2010 at St. Thomas Church, Menasha, Wisconsin |
[Acts 5:27-32](#) | [Psalm 150](#) | [Revelation 1:4-8](#) | [John 20:19-31](#)

None of us go through life unscathed. The longer we live the more we understand and feel the scars of life. There are many among us who have experienced the wounds of this life without having lived a long time. Many children among us and near us have felt the hurts of this life. I had a counseling professor who said that pain is the common denominator among human beings. Young and old and in-between, we know about pain and loss.

In our reaction to pain and loss, I think we have a continuum list, a grading that we look to evaluate the load of difficulty someone has experienced or overcome. If they haven't had enough difficulty in life, then we can't trust their judgment because they haven't experienced life like we have. We can't quite trust them. Then there are those poor folk who seem to have a black cloud over their head and if something can go wrong for them, it will. They have had more than their share of trouble. We don't trust them either. With folks who have bucket loads of trouble, we tell ourselves and maybe even them, that it must be their fault. We become like Job's friends who said that things wouldn't be so bad if he hadn't sinned. We tell ourselves that the people who have had about the right amount of trouble in life are the ones we can trust. They understand what life is really like. We want to know that they are like us.

Thomas was the only one that hadn't seen Jesus on resurrection day. What would it be like to be the only one who hadn't seen him? He probably wanted to believe them, but he couldn't. He had to see the wounds. He had to see the scars. He couldn't believe without seeing. Pain does funny things to us. Thomas had lost Jesus like all the rest of his friends. Not only was Jesus gone, but the entire Jesus organization, the group, the family...gone. Loss like that doesn't disappear miraculously. Now his friends, his family, were telling him that Jesus was alive! "Not unless I see the wounds. My broken heart does not have room for that kind of hope."

We know the rest of the story. Jesus comes again. This time, our patron saint is in the room. Again, Jesus said to them, 'Peace be with you.' It could be that Jesus really meant those words. Maybe it was a gift and a command. After he encourages peace with them, he turns to Thomas. Touch my scars Thomas, feel the wounds in my body. Thomas didn't look at his wounds; he looked at Jesus face and eyes. That was enough. Now we have the clearest confession of Christ in scripture, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus does some teaching at this moment about blessed be those who believe without seeing.

Jesus loved Thomas even though he had trouble believing. Isn't that wonderful! We are Thomas in the story. Most of us have trouble with believing. Jesus still loves us and meets with us.

I'm torn about which way to go now. Do I preach about how we are to be the presence of the living Christ among those who have trouble believing? Do I continue on that thought and encourage your patience and love for them because Jesus had patience and love for you? It could be pretty good. Yet, I can't get away from needing to see the scars and wounds. I wonder if we have trouble sharing the love of Christ because of our needs to see the wounds of others, or because of our need for our own scars to be acknowledged. Our pain gets in the way. We want others to come into the kingdom of God the same way we did. This is across the board human nature. We want others to do things the same way we do and we want them to believe the same

way we do. The truth is that our wounds and scars send us down different paths. Some folks make lots of bad decisions because of their pain that are visible to everyone. Some make bad decisions that are invisible to others, but just as damaging to themselves and others.

Jesus knows this. He doesn't accept the reactions to pain from the folks on this side of the church and reject the reactions from the folks on this side. He knows we are human and we are different. He wants to touch our wounds and scars and heal them. He doesn't want to see them to make sure we are genuine or in worthy pain, he just wants to touch us and make us whole. He loves us.

That's our Easter message for the church, our community and the world. Jesus knows our wounds and is not here to evaluate our responses to them. He knows what we do. Jesus just wants to touch and heal. He wants to give us a new path. He wants us to do the same for others. He doesn't want us to evaluate each other's scars and decisions we have made because of them. We are messengers of good news.

The Easter message is about healing. We are all wounded. You may not see someone else's wounds, but they are there whether you see them or not. I promise you. Believe their pain, like Jesus believes ours. That is what love does. Don't demand to see them and don't demand that they deal with them like we do. Let them see you, like Jesus lets us see Him. When we reveal the love of Christ through us, scars and all, then the reaction catches on, My Lord and my God. When that happens, something strange happens to all of our hurts and scars. The Christ of Easter loves us into new hope and life. Our pain directs our paths less and less and the joy of abundant life in Christ leads us.