

**BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED**

“It is related in the annals of the Monastery of Clairvaux in France that St. Bernard asked Our Lord which was his greatest unrecorded suffering and Our Lord answered: ‘I had on my shoulder while I bore my cross on the Way of Sorrows, a grievous wound which was more painful than the others, and which is not recorded by men. Honor this wound with thy devotion, and I will grant thee whatever thou dost ask through its virtue and merit. And in regard to those who shall venerate this wound, I will remit to them all their venial sins and no longer remember their mortal sins.’”

Do you know why Catholics display crucifixes and many other denominations of Christians use only the empty cross? It is because of the wounds of Christ. “By his wounds you are healed.” What do you think of when you think of the wounds of Jesus? On Friday evening I watched The Passion of the Christ downstairs in Friendship Hall with about 40 other parishioners. I wept through most of it. I sat there fingering my rosary beads and absorbing the horrific beating and inhuman cruelty afflicted upon my Lord. And I always think to myself, “He endured that for your sins, man. Your selfishness, your ‘I could care less’ attitude, your greed and sloth and lust and anger and arrogance. All of that is responsible for those wounds.” I blame not Pontius Pilate nor even the Jewish Religious leaders although they will answer for what they did as will we all. But I blame myself and I ask the Lord’s forgiveness. I went to confession yesterday. My sin is real. My sin is always real. My need for the forgiveness of Jesus is also very real. And that is why he forgives.

Jesus was wounded in every aspect of his life. Physically in his scourging and beating and crowning and crucifixion. Psychologically in the ridicule of his crowning with thorns and covered with a purple by brutal and vicious soldiers. And in his terrible agony in Gethsemane as he faced the full weight of the sins of the world. Personally and emotionally by his betrayal by Judas—with a kiss of all things. Our lips often betray him in one way or another. Personally and emotionally in Peter’s loud denial, “I do not know the man,” a few scant hours after Peter promised to lay down his life for Jesus. Peter’s denial leaves Jesus thoroughly alone and abandoned by the very ones he wanted to count on. Peter will have to accept Jesus’ death and find a way to receive forgiveness from the man whom he let down terribly. But he will and he does.

And spiritually, Jesus meets his mother and sees her face. What can he say? He cannot spare her. He does not spare her. Just as he is not spared. And spiritually also when he calls on his Father over and over again but now hears no voice from heaven to assure and encourage him like he did at other times in his ministry. And yet there will be moments of solace for Jesus in his woundedness. Seeing his mother there, and Mary Magdalen and the Beloved Disciple. Having his bloodied face wiped by Veronica. Receiving the help of Simon of Cyrene to help him with his cross. And the words of the thief crucified next to him.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that I see the wounded Christ and I think of the role my sins played in all that. What do you see? Do you see that too? I hope so. But there is more. Do you dare to see your own wounds too? Your own being wounded physically, emotionally, psychologically, personally, spiritually? Do you dare allow yourself to touch your own wounds with your mind and heart and memory? You are not alone. The wounded Christ abides. Do not be afraid of identifying your wounds and seeing in them the very same wounds in Our Lord. Dare to bring your wounds to him to share them with him. Dare to see the cross you carry and have carried for others in the cross he carried for you. Dare to recognize that he carried that cross so that you would know you are not alone in carrying your own cross. Our crucifixes remind us of the wounds and those wounds remind us of our own woundedness but our own healing too. Forget the wounds and we run the risk of forgetting the healing.

He is the man with the pierced side and the wounded hands and feet and head and heart. He knows my pain. He knows my suffering. He knows and touches all the places I have been wounded—over and over again. As many times as is necessary until I allow the healing finally to take hold. My friends, that is the message today. He knows. He heals. He knows all the places you have been wounded. He knows all the hurts—the self-inflicted ones and those from others and the injustice of this life. Let him touch that in you which has been hurt. And by his wounds—be healed.