

THE WOUNDED SURGEON

Ten years ago this month I got married. One of the odd things about getting married in the Sunday service after Easter was that the bible reading we had was the story of doubting Thomas. Doubt doesn't really seem an appropriate sentiment for a wedding! In the story, Thomas, who is absent when Jesus appears to the other disciples, says:

"Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers in the marks of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe"

A week later when Thomas is with the disciples Jesus appears again and says:

"Peace be with you" then turning to Thomas he says "Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Be not doubting but believe"

Jesus accepts Thomas as he is, in the midst of his doubt and he responds to Thomas' need even though it comes from a lack of trust. Sometimes people outside the Church, and even sometimes people within the Church treat the resurrection like some kind of Hollywood Blockbuster – God's ultimate conjuring trick with bones! But there are no trumpets at the resurrection, no fairytale finale and Thomas really does doubt that it can have happened. The Jesus who is resurrected is still marked by his wounds. His suffering, *our suffering*, is not ignored or wiped out by the resurrection because God's love for us is shown in and through suffering. This is what one writer, Jean Vanier wrote about the wounds of Christ:

"A gaping hole remains in his side, big enough to fit a hand; a hole remains in his hand and his feet big enough to fit a finger. These wounds are there for all ages and for all time, to reveal the humble and forgiving love of Jesus who accepted to go to the utter end of love. The risen Jesus does not appear as the powerful one, but as the wounded and forgiving one. These wounds become his glory. From the wounds in his side flowed the waters that vivify and heal us. Through his wounds we are healed. Jesus invites each one of us, through Thomas, to touch not only his wounds, but those wounds in others and ourselves, wounds that can make us hate others and ourselves...These wounds will be transformed as a sign of forgiveness through the love of Jesus...We too will show our wounds when we are with him in the kingdom, revealing our brokenness and the healing power of Jesus."

So who is the wounded surgeon? The title at first appears a contradiction, but of course, Jesus is the wounded surgeon, the man who brings healing not through military or earthly power but through his suffering.

One of the many mistakes we often make at Easter is to see the resurrection as a fantastical magic trick that can't possibly be true. Doubt is not the problem here – just as it wasn't a problem for Jesus when he met Thomas. The opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty, for certainty won't allow us to see our brokenness, *our* need for healing. So this Eastertide take a second look at the wounded surgeon, and see reflected back your own wounds. And see those wounds, not ignored or marginalized, but marked on the body of the Son of God who in his resurrection and ascension lifts our suffering brokenness to the Father. For in Christ's wounds we recognize our own pains, and in his resurrection we glimpse the promise of transformation, of new life, of hope.

May God Bless you this Eastertide,

FR. PHIL

Jean Vanier – *Drawn into the mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*
'The wounded Surgeon' is from T.S.Eliot's *Four Quartets*