

## Easter Sunday 2021

It has been, pardon the expression, a hell of a year for those who have lost so much:

- ✓ millions sick,
- ✓ hundreds of thousands dead,
- ✓ tens of thousands out of work,
- ✓ a fourth wave pending,
- ✓ national morale very low,
- ✓ the country divided,
- ✓ and the crisis at the border front and center.

I called Catholic Charities this past week and asked, “How can St. Mary of the Lakes be part of the answer for the crisis at the border? And she on the other end of the line said, ‘Father, I share your frustration, but we’ve been told we’re too soon. We need to be patient and wait.’ Too soon! Wait!

As the United States and the world over wear these scars and wait, Who can bring us hope that better days lie ahead, and that all this pain and anguish is not for naught?

One thing is for sure. No healing can come from God that the modern day thinker considers as an impractical crutch, from a Jesus understood by modern day thinkers as merely a

good man, who is bound like the rest of us, by the chains of death.

The only One who can bring solace to these current times is a Christ with scars, Who Himself has passed through death to give us hope and life, and this is the Christ of Easter. And what are part and parcel to the Easter story but the scars of Christ. Mary Magdalen, who was at His feet, in the home of Simon and again at the Cross, was at His feet again in the garden; and not until she saw on those feet the scars of Calvary did she recognize who Jesus is – “Master!”

Then the Risen, Scarred Christ came to the skeptical, to the doubting, in the person of Thomas, whose lack of faith made him a doubter. When told by the other disciples that they had seen the Lord, Thomas said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands, unless I put my finger into the place where the nails were, and my hands into His side, I will not believe.” (JN 20:25)

Eight days later when the disciples were in the room and Thomas was with them, Our Risen Lord said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see My hands, and bring your hand and put it into My side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” And

Thomas answered with a profession of solid faith, “My Lord and My God!” (JN 20:26-28)

A solid profession of faith! Thank God for the solid confession of faith each and every one of us can and will make as we renew our baptismal vows this evening/morning.

Otherwise, we would go on experimenting, know not where we are going or why we are here, because:

- ✓ each con has its pro;
- ✓ each pro its con.
- ✓ every lunatic has his “case”
- ✓ every fool admits “another side,”
- ✓ and every riddle has a thousand answers to every ten questions.

When brought face to face with the certitude a Catholic has in his faith, or the peace of soul and security and the feeling of “being at home” that every convert has, coming into the Church every Easter Vigil, the confused modern attributes it to:

- ✓ to excessive credulity,
- ✓ to the surrender of reason,
- ✓ to priestcraft,

in a word, to anything and everything except the real reason, namely, arriving at and discovering the Truth.

The kind of Christ the world needs today is the Virile Christ, who can offer a broken world the pledge of victory through His own bloody sacrifice for salvation. No false god who is immune from pain and sorrow can console us in these tragic days as does Our Crucified and Risen Lord!

Take out of the equation:

- ✓ the Christ of the Scars,
- ✓ Who is the Son of the Living God,
- ✓ and Who rose from the dead,

and what assurance do we have that evil shall not triumph over good? If He who came to this earth to teach the dignity of the human soul, and to challenge a sinful world to stop from sinning, had no other destiny than to hang on a common cross with common criminals to make a Roman holiday, then any one of us could ask, "If this is what happens to a good man, then why should I be good?" What motivation is there for virtue, what motivation is there for good, if the greatest of all injustices is never set right, if the noblest of all Lives is consigned to a tomb?

What am I to think of God Who would look down unmoved on this spectacle of Innocence and not do something?

Wouldn't that make me hate, not only God Who had no care for truth and love, but also hate my fellow man for being party to His death? If this is the end of goodness, then why be good at all?

Because He is not only man but God, because He is not only a teacher but a Redeemer. He can take the worst this world has to offer and by His power as God, rise above it. He, who is unarmed, can use the weapons of goodness and forgiveness so that no one will be without hope as the Risen Christ shows us His scarred hands, His scarred feet, and His lanced side.

What do the scars of Christ teach us? They teach us that life is a struggle; that our condition of a final resurrection is exactly the same as His; that:

- ✓ unless there is a cross in our lives, there will never be an empty tomb;
- ✓ unless there is a Good Friday, there will never be an Easter Sunday;
- ✓ unless there is a crown of thorns, there will never be a halo of light;
- ✓ and unless we suffer with Him, we shall not rise with Him.

Those who don't believe in Jesus or His resurrection, who do they have as the captain of their ship, as the anchor that secures them? Who? What? Whomever they have at their center is either a corpse or a someday corpse, a lifeless, soulless cadaver, that will lead them to dust, dissolution and death.

But for us believers, on the other hand, Jesus of the Scars and His victory over evil, did not give us immunity from:

- ✓ hardship and woe,
- ✓ pain and sorrow,
- ✓ crucifixion and death.

Rather, He taught us to bear the worst this life has to offer with courage and serenity, and to transfigure some of life's greatest pains into the richest gains of the spiritual life.

So with St. Paul, we can triumphantly ask, "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be

able to separate us from the love of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

Why? Because evil will never be stronger than it was on that first Good Friday, for the worst thing that evil can do is not infect us with a virus or upset our way of life. As unspeakable as it is, the worst evil can do is not abuse children:

- ✓ on the way to the border,
- ✓ at the border,
- ✓ or anywhere else.

The worst thing that evil can do is kill God. And having been defeated in that, in its strongest moment, when evil wore its greatest armor, evil can never be victorious again.