

I have an important question for you? Are you looking for something more in your faith journey? If so, then maybe you are ready for the next step on the Discipleship Path. This next step is involving yourself in a small group. Because we are a faith community, we need others to journey with us in order to grow in our faith. This is so important for all of us, especially now, as we experience the ill-effects of our isolation.

Small groups enable us to share our faith journeys and listen and learn from others' stories as well. Small groups can be the support we desperately need in this age of secularism. Our small groups will meet virtually once a week. Visit our parish websites and choose the group and time that is right for you and register; the group leader will reach out to you with additional details.

The groups begin meeting the week of April 25th.

It is up to us to grow our faith, no one can do it for us. I encourage you to reach out and take the next step on your Discipleship Path.

In our Gospel today the disciples are shocked and filled with unbelief when Jesus appears before them in the upper room. How can this be? Three days ago, they stood by as he died on the cross and yet, here he is.

They shrink back in fear and terror at the sight of him. And how could they not be terrified? They were still trying to comprehend the full impact of the events of the last few days.

Jesus speaks to them: touch me, feel my flesh and bones, see my hands, my feet, my side. It is I, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones!

None of this made sense. So what was it that convinced them? They were convinced when he showed them his wounds, the wounds where the nails had pierced his hands and the sword his side.

These were the unmistakable marks that no one they knew could possibly have, save their teacher and mentor Jesus. His hands and feet bear the signs of his crucifixion, his defeat, and his vulnerability.

His glorified, resurrected body bears the marks of the wounds from his passion and death. This tells us something. That his wounds are important and that our wounds are also important.

Our message series for this Easter Season is called “Hope, Re-Focused”. We will hear throughout this series how the disciples, and how we can look to the risen Jesus and re-focus our minds and hearts to find true and lasting hope.

The disciples were locked in a room for fear of the authorities. As we heard in last Sunday's gospel and again, today, in Luke's Gospel, they are still hiding out in the upper room, afraid, disillusioned and discouraged.

This is certainly a far cry from the upper room of the Last Supper where, several days before, Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. So much has happened between these two events. The hopes and dreams of the disciples were bound up in Jesus, who was brutally executed on Good Friday.

But now Jesus stands before them and they find comfort, joy and great hope. They draw close to him, eager to hear his words. They, in a sense, also come alive as Jesus himself has.

As they draw close, Jesus is able to open their minds to help them understand the scriptures and that what had taken place is His fulfillment of salvation history.

And so, the question comes back to us. Are we able to recognize this Jesus in our lives today in spite of our own woundedness, our grief, our brokenness, our sin?

Or, are we driven to distraction by our fears and anxieties, especially now, as this pandemic takes yet another turn? Do we recognize that Jesus is with us, among us, in our suffering and our loneliness, in the death of a loved one, the end of a marriage or in the face of financial collapse?

And how do we explain to others that we hope in a wounded Christ; one who bears the marks of a horrible death?

Through word and sign, Jesus has offered us hope. For the disciples, and for us, our hope comes from the one who conquered death by rising. Hope comes from Jesus, the wounded healer, the one who emptied himself and became one of us.

Our hope comes from God who came to dwell among us and who teaches us power in weakness. Our Lord invites us to unite our woundedness with his Divine Grace. This is our joy. This is our great hope!

His wounds, a sign of our failings, our despair and our brokenness, he willingly took upon himself.

Humanity has been favoured by the Incarnation. Jesus has taken on our human nature and has made of our human estate something that is blessed and sacred.

Our Savior has embodied so much of what we have experienced in life; our ups and downs, our woundedness, our sorrows and our joys.

We are made in God's image and so we are holy and good and able to bless and heal this world around us, in spite of our weaknesses.

And how do we experience this wounded healer as the disciples did; this Messiah whose earthly body has been scarred by life and by death?

We experience Him through this Eucharistic celebration. His Body, His blood on this altar. In receiving this sacred gift we are then able to give ourselves over to God. We are able to offer him our broken and tattered lives, our joys, sorrows, successes and failures. We offer our humanity to Him, who is the bread of life for us.

That is cause for great joy, that we have become sharers in the Glory of God. We are capable of so much with the power and grace of the One who loves us.

I mentioned earlier that our wounds are important because the wounds of Christ are important.

Could it be that his wounds are a sign that we ourselves should lead with our own woundedness? Could it be that we are to serve in our brokenness and not in our strength?

Could it be that others are touched and even healed by those who reach out to them through their own imperfection?

It is not just about doing something for someone else but rather we are to journey along side them. It is not just about giving something in charity but rather we are to learn from those to whom we minister.

That is real solidarity. That is living with, living beside and living for others. That is reaching out and touching their wounds and allowing them to touch our wounds as well.

This is also how we recognize and experience the risen Jesus. This is how we “Go in peace, and glorify the Lord by our lives”.

This is how we fulfill the mission we have been given; to bring hope and our Easter joy to those whom we are called to love as Jesus has loved us. In that way, we are truly “witnesses to all of these things”.

In a reflection called *Scarred and Hungry*, writer Debie Thomas observes: If even at the apex of his resurrection victory, Jesus’ witness was a witness of scars, then maybe we should take heed.

Maybe when the world looks at us to see if we are real, to see if the Jesus we love and the faith we profess is truly approachable and trustworthy, they need to see our scars more than our piety.

Wounds aren't pretty, and no, they don't tell the whole story of the Christian journey. But the stories they do tell are holy. Jesus didn't hide the bloody and the broken. Neither should we.