

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Apr 23rd 2017

What a wonderful set of reading we have today. Our first reading from Acts reminds us of the ideal that we strive towards in living out our Christian vocation with others. In the psalm and the second reading from Peter, we are reminded, in an encouraging way, how GOD's love and care for us is persistent and triumphant, even over the inevitable struggles of life.

The Gospel reading from John recounts the story of Thomas the Apostle coming to believe by putting his fingers and hands in the wounds of the Risen Jesus. This "doubting Thomas" recount is a resurrection story that is probably quite familiar to many of us.

In the compilation of Lent and Easter readings titled All Shall Be Well that we read for a faculty/staff book club here at Creighton recently, Robert Schreiter, CPPS writes: "When Thomas is invited to touch Jesus' wounds, those wounds draw out of him the disruptions below the surface of his own life. His trust has been shaken, his faith in Jesus as the messenger of God's reign has been called into question. Touching the wounds of Jesus connects his inner wounds to those very visible ones of Jesus. The wounds of Jesus' heart can be placed in the larger and deeper wounds of Jesus, hands and side. In this way, Thomas is healed and can move from doubt to his confession of faith." What a powerful way for us to navigate our own sufferings that we carry each day.

I also have been inspired by Pope Francis' homily several years ago on this Gospel passage when he spoke about we encounter the living God through Jesus' wounds. Pope Francis says that we meet the living God as we tenderly kiss the wounds of Jesus in our hungry, poor, sick, imprisoned brothers and sisters. Like St. Thomas, our life will only be changed when we touch the Risen Christ's wounds present in the poor, sick and needy. It resonates with my experience teaching kindergarten at Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, when I was transformed and felt I knew Jesus intimately by learning from the students and families at the school. The wounds of poverty, geographic isolation, lack of economic opportunities, tragic deaths, domestic violence, substance abuse and transition were very real for many of my students and their family members. By walking with them, learning with them and learning to love more deeply than I ever thought that I could, enabled me to know Jesus more intimately. And, from there, I could see the beauty of the resurrection in the hopes and dreams of the young students and their families, the beauty of the land, the strengths of relationships and the depth of faith in the people I worked with and knew there.

I pray that we are able to learn from Thomas in whatever way we need to, to become closer to Christ during this Easter season.

