

touching the wounds

What we are dealing with in the accounts of Jesus' appearance is his glorified body. It's not a ghost—the gospels are especially at pains to point that out. But neither is it just a resuscitated body, but a body that can do extraordinary things—walk through walls, for instance, but still eat fish.

But there's one thing in particular that always blows my mind about this glorified body of Jesus: that his glorified body still has his wounds. I've seen the devotional pictures of the light coming through the holes in the hands and the feet and they get it right—his glorified body still has wounds. So Thomas, for instance, was on to something when he demands in John's Gospel, to see the marks of the nails and put his fingers into Jesus' side. But here as well in Luke's version, it is Jesus himself who shows them his hands and his feet, the place of the wounds. The gospel writers seem to want to make a specific point about this. They knew that this would now be the real identifying mark of the Christ—the wounds through which the glory shines.

More than anything, that's the litmus test for authentic Christianity, whether it be the image of God or the model of church: the wounds. Then we'll know the Christ of God, and the God of Christ. As Peter says in his discourse today, *God fulfilled what had been foretold through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer.*^[1]

But there's a next step too: seeing those same wounds in other places—and touching them. First of all, in our sisters and brothers, because he said, *Anything you do to the least of these you'll do for me.* Ronald Rolheiser asks, "Why are we so enthralled by a person like Padre Pio who carried the wounds of Jesus in his hands and his feet, and yet remain blind to the wounds of Christ in the face of the . . . person [next to us that] we try so much to avoid?" So the wounds of our brothers and sisters are the wounds of Christ. This is why the first apostles are carrying on a ministry of healing bodies, as in these accounts from the Acts of the Apostles. This too is the fulfillment of the scriptures, that this man be made strong and returned to perfect health.

We could also find the wounds of Jesus in ourselves, every time we look in the mirror, because what was not assumed by Christ was not healed. In other words, Jesus lived and therefore redeemed the human condition, Jesus felt every ache that a human being can feel especially the terror of death hanging on a cross crying, *'My God why have you abandoned me.'* So we can cherish our own wounds because it is out of these that our own glory will shine.

I read recently about a Japanese pottery technique called *kintsugi*: it's the art of repairing broken pottery pieces. A *kintsugi* master will take the broken work and replace the piece with lacquer dusted with gold. That makes the broken parts—the wounds—actually more beautiful than the rest of the pot! A Japanese potter who was also a Christian applied that concept to theology, saying that, “It's through our brokenness that God's grace can shine through, like the gold that fills fissures in *kintsugi*.” Jesus didn't come to just to “fix” us, and not just to restore us, but to make of us something new—new creation. So, like the wounds of Christ that he still has after the resurrection, if we honor our brokenness those broken shapes can somehow become a part of the New World to come—new heaven and new earth. All things, even broken things, can be made new again, and sometimes they can be made even more beautiful. And they don't have to be hidden, in shadows or in shame.^[2]

There is beautiful Easter reading from Saint Bonaventure in which he says the “beautiful flower of Jesus, who had blossomed in the Incarnation and withered in the passion, now blossoms anew in the resurrection... His most glorious body, subtle, agile and immortal suffused with such radiant glory that he truly outshines the sun...” But why? Bonaventure says, “so as to become *our own* glory” and to forecast “how beautiful the human body will be at its own resurrection.”^[3] This was a triumph for human flesh as well as for all creation.

The Eucharist brings all of that together. It's our own body and blood, our own bread and wine, that get lifted up to become the meal before they are the real presence of Christ. And they become the resurrected, glorified body of the Risen Lord whose glory shines forth from the wounds he still bears. And we, we are waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly bodies into glorious copies of his own and our glory will shine forth from our wounds too, restored with lacquer dusted with gold, through him, with him and in him!

cyprian 4/7/21 Thursday in the Octave of Easter

^[1] Acts 3:11-26.

^[2] “Why Is Jesus Still Wounded After His Resurrection?” The New York Times 4/4/21, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/03/opinion/christ-resurrection-easter.html>.

^[3] WIS III, 151-152.