

3rd Sunday of Easter B April 18, 2021 STM: 5:15, 8, 10.

Many of us have scars on our body. I have one here on my chin. It was not my fault. I was 6 years old. My sister, Terri, who is 8 years older than me, was supposed to be watching my other sister, Susan, who is two years older than me, and yours truly. Well, I think Terri was watching TV or something. Susan and I were supposed to stay in front of the house. We had just moved there and we did not have any friends. Susan told me "all I had was you." So, she took me in search of new friends (yes, I was innocent) to the apartment complex up the street from where we lived. They had monkey bars there. Well, I slipped, and my chin hit the monkey bar. Blood flowed. We ran back to the house. Terri saw what was happening. She said "you came back bleeding" and called my mom who worked at the local hospital. She sent a taxi for us. Mom knew the owners and they said they would send someone to pick me up I was delivered to the hospital along with my sisters. Now, I have a scar to forever remind me of the love of both of my sisters.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, life has its way of leaving a mark on us all. Our bodies often tell the story of our life. Maybe you have scars from an accident. Maybe you have scar on your abdomen from where a kidney was donated.

Pastor JD Shankles tells the story of a visiting preacher to his church who did not have legs. The preacher's name was Rolf. Early on in his life, on two separate occasions, he was diagnosed with cancer, each time leading to the amputation of a leg.

The Pastor's son, Elliot, upon seeing Rolf, asked "Daddy, how come that man doesn't have any legs?" He had never experienced this before.

Not entirely sure how best to explain this to Elliot, Pastor Shankles asked Rolf what the best practice was when a child is curious about someone living with a disability. And he graciously said that the best practice for him was to ask him about it.

He writes: So right there, my son asked Rolf about his legs and Rolf explained to my son about how he got cancer in both of them which meant that the doctors had to cut them off. After Rolf said that, we could tell that something wasn't computing for Elliot. Finally Elliot asked, "So what did they do with the holes?"

"What holes?" Rolf asked. "The holes in your legs," Elliot said. "They sewed them up," Rolf said. "But how?" "With stitches." "But how?" Elliot just couldn't comprehend how this was possible. And then Rolf did this profoundly gracious thing. He said to my son, "*Would you like to see?*"

Elliot quietly nodded and there in the middle of everything going on, Rolf opened up his pant leg to let my son touch and see his scars. So that Elliot would understand.

In that moment, there was something profoundly human, and vulnerable, and at the very same time sacred.

Our gospel today begins with the two disciples recounting the Emmaus story and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. There, at Emmaus, they got a taste of God. They experienced the presence of the Resurrected Christ in a real way. Now, they are back with the other apostles. They are telling this story of being with Christ. Don't forget that the two apostles were walking away from Jerusalem-away from Christ. Jesus went after them. Now they have gone home to Jerusalem. They were probably overcome with what they had experienced. As they are telling this story about an encounter with Jesus, Jesus comes into their midst. Everyone is troubled. Is this a ghost? No, it is the Christ. And what does Jesus do to prove who is in their midst? He offers them his hands and his feet-he offers them his wounds-his scars. Jesus did not perform some mighty act to prove who he was. He did not call down legion of angels. He did not open the skies. He did not raise the dead. He offered his hands and his feet. He offered his scars. This would need to be enough to prove this was no ghost. Jesus let his friends see his body, his bruised, scared body. He exposed his humanity to them.

We tend to think of the Resurrection as this perfect thing-as all things being made new. That is true in many ways. But Jesus did not appear perfect. He appeared with scars. Think for a moment about what this means. It means that what happened to Jesus in his life before the resurrection -in his earthly life-matters in his resurrected life. It means that the whole of humanity-scars and all-are loved and welcomed. It means that the human body is beloved by God. The human body matters deeply to God. God loves it all, God heals it all, God redeems it all. The divine life participates in the human life. God and humanity, forever mixed together, scars and all.

Roy McCloughry writes that Jesus "has taken up the marks of disability into himself" and that "his body, in showing how he suffered, offers solidarity with all who remain disabled." Similarly, Nancy Eieslund says, "Resurrection is not about the negation or (the erasing) of our disabled bodies in hopes of perfect images, untouched by physical disability; rather Christ's resurrection offers hope that our nonconventional, and sometimes difficult, bodies participate fully in the (image of God) ..."

Resurrection does not exist apart from this earthly life. It involves scars and disabilities. Resurrection involves all of human life. Jesus, in showing his scars, tells us this. Resurrection involves the broken parts of life. It involves the ordinary parts. Jesus shows that all the more in his next move in this passage. He asks for something to eat. He eats with his friends whom he loved. Resurrection is in solidarity with the world. Then Jesus tells his friends that they will be his witnesses in the world. He will send their scarred bodies into the world to tell others about him and lead them to resurrected life.

All of us have wounds. We have to embrace that. None of us is free of woundedness and scars. And it is from that woundedness that we can indeed help others. We possess solidarity with God in all of this, he who bore our wounds. God lived a human life and left this earth scared. So will we. None of us has a perfect life. We have wounds, we have scars. Some scars are visible to others, some are not. Some are external, some are internal in our mind, on our heart and in

our soul. Everyone in this church today has some sort of scar. But they are all redeemed by Christ. For he does not erase our past. No, he welcomes our past with its failings and hurts and wounds and, yes, scars. Jesus would not have it any other way. The resurrected Christ sees the scars of our body and simply says "me too." Amen.