

"Go Be My Wounded Healers"

Homily of April 18, 2004

by Father Gerry Murphy

Jesus came and stood in their midst and ... showed them his hands and his side

Picture the scene: Christ's disciples, huddled in fear and confusion behind closed doors, in the aftermath of their master's violent death and apparent demise. It is all too much for them; they are devastated, disillusioned and alone. Suddenly and mysteriously Jesus manifests himself to them in a newly risen and transformed state: now glorified, but still bearing the scars and wounds of his crucifixion. The disciples are overjoyed at his appearance, and take strength from his reassuring words, 'Peace be with you,'

But what does it all mean? Is this the same Jesus they knew and lived with before he was put to death? Has he come back to live and stay with them as before? Is he going to make it all better now, just like waking up from a bad dream? And can they simply continue to go on as before in their ministry with him? The answer to all these questions is, I believe, a categorical, 'No, I don't think so!'

During the years his disciples lived with him, Jesus taught them many things and instilled in them a deep faith. But now, in his brief post-resurrection appearances among them, he wishes to draw them into a deeper and more mature faith; he seeks to deepen their understanding of his and their mission. Let us examine how he chooses to do this.

After uttering the words, "Peace be with you," Jesus showed them his hands and his side. Why? Why did he do this? To satisfy those among them, like Thomas, who needed reassurance and proof of his identity? Yes. But there is more. I believe, in showing his disciples his hands and his side, Jesus was saying to them - and now to us: 'Recognize who I am I in my woundedness and poverty. Recognize me in the woundedness and poverty of suffering humanity. Recognize me in your own woundedness, vulnerability and poverty. I live in human weakness, in human anguish and in human pain. I did not come to abolish suffering, but to fill it with my presence - my risen and glorified presence.'

In other words, as baptized and believing followers of Christ, we are called to embrace all the joys and sorrows of our human experience as moments of unfolding glory. No human weakness, suffering or imperfection is lived in vain when it is lived in the context of cross and resurrection. And when Christ breathed on his trembling disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. As the Father has sent me, so I send you,' what he was in effect saying to them was: 'I am now empowering you to return to the world as my wounded healers.' 'You bear the wounds of my

crucifixion in your soul, and from your sharing in my cross, and now in my risen Spirit, you have all you need to live my message and my teachings courageously.' 'Go be my wounded healers in a world that desperately needs you.'

At the moment I happen to be reading a book entitled: 'The Vision of Peace - Faith and Hope in Northern Ireland.' It tells the story of Mairead Corrigan Maguire, who back in 1976 spearheaded a Peace movement when the conflict in Northern Ireland was at its height. The particular tragedy that spurred Mairead to co-found the Peace People Movement, was the death of her sister's three children on August 10, 1976. The children were Joanne (eight and a half years old), John (two and a half years old), and Andrew (six weeks old). They died when a British army patrol shot and killed a nineteen-year-old IRA volunteer, Danny Lennon, whose car then crashed onto the sidewalk killing the three children and seriously injuring Mairead's sister. And even though Mairead's sister, Anne, eventually recovered from her injuries, years of psychotic depression resulting from this trauma, led her in 1980 to take her own life.

Within weeks of this particular tragedy, Mairead Maguire and her friend, Betty Williams, were organizing peace rallies all over the North of Ireland, the South of Ireland and in Great Britain to say to the men and women of violence, "Enough is enough." Mairead Corrigan Maguire was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976, and has gone on to become a dynamic prophet of peace and non-violence throughout the world. Out of the ashes and anguish of her deep personal loss, Mairead exemplifies what it means to be a wounded healer in our divided world.

Lord Jesus, as we now approach the table of the Eucharist, help us to believe that, in receiving your body and blood we are filled with your love and are empowered to live and love as you lived and loved on earth. Help us to allow the suffering, broken, poor and wounded Christ in us, reach out and touch the suffering, broken, poor and wounded Christ in others - confident that in our mutual blessing and forgiveness, Christ is risen and glorified in us, in our Church and in all of your beautiful creation. Amen.