

Wall Street United Church

John 20:19-31: *It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven." Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe."*

After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!" Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe." Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

Scars are interesting things. I still have a scar on my chin from when I was sliding on the ice when I was in grade one and a big kid sliding behind me landed on my head. I ended up needing stitches again in that same spot when I went with the Wall Street Youth Group to Landon Bay on a winter retreat and again fell sliding on some ice. You'd think those experiences would scar me for life, but I still love sliding on ice! I bet most of you have scars, and I bet you could tell us exactly when and how you got them. I remember when my daughter Petra was a little younger she would always ask my mother to tell her the story of the large scar on her forearm. Petra is still interested in scars, and has just finished up her first year at Queens in Nursing.

On Easter day, Jesus appears to the disciples in the Upper Room and he says to them: *"Peace be with you,"* and then he shows them the wounds on his hands and his side. Why does Jesus do that? Is he like a little kid who wanted the disciples to see his owie so they can all be like "Oh man! That must have hurt, Oh brutal!"? People do like to show off their war wounds, but I don't think that's the case here. It's for two reasons:

1. The scars show he is real – he's not an apparition. In Luke, he comes right out and says to the disciples that he's not a ghost. Then he asks if they have anything to eat, and they give him some broiled fish which he eats in front of them. The same is true for this story, showing them the wounds on his hands and side. Jesus is proving to them that he is real and actually risen from the dead. The Risen Christ isn't the same as before, but the Gospel stories are very clear that they are not seeing a ghost or a Spirit.
2. The second reason he shows his wounds is so that they will recognize him. His appearance has somehow changed – maybe like the Transfiguration. Remember when he goes up a mountain with Peter, James and John, and his appearance changes? That's what transfigure means — a change in appearance. In the case of the transfiguration, his face radiates. Maybe it's similar? I don't know because they don't describe his appearance, but we do know that they don't recognize him. It's only when he shows them his scars, that they see the cross and they see him. They recognize their teacher and Lord.

Interesting — it is **by his scars** that he makes himself recognizable. It's an amazing little detail. The Risen Christ had scars. You would have thought that in the resurrection everything would be perfect, but he still has scars. And he points to them – he shows them off. In sign language the name “*Jesus*” is signed by touching the holes on each hand. He is known in sign language by his wounds. I think that is wonderful and remarkable.

We worship strength. We want strength in our bodies and strength in our minds. How many of you are watching what you eat, exercising – doing Lucy's exercise class so that you can be stronger? Or doing Wordle or Sudoku puzzles to keep your brain sharper and live longer? We also want strength in our bank accounts! And we'd like to be known by our strengths. “She's a good public speaker and a good swimmer.” Or “He's a great guitar player and dedicated board member.”

The same goes for communities and countries. We want strength in our economy and strength in our military. And we want to be known by our strengths. ‘*Brockville is a beautiful city, Brockville is a vibrant city*’. And as of yesterday, partly thanks to an amazing, tough, dedicated crew from Wall Street, Brockville is a clean city! We could do the same for our country.

The funny thing is, Jesus makes himself known not by his strength but by his weakness, by his defeat, by his trauma, by his death on a cross. That's how the disciples recognized Jesus — because of his scars. They recognize his physical wounds.

Most of us, maybe all of us, have scars. But it's not just the physical wounds that scar us. Most of us also have scars in our hearts. Scars from past hurts, from times of rejection, from when someone you loved died, from when you did something you regret, from a trauma you experienced. We all have those scars. And most of us would keep them hidden if we can. We don't want to be known for those failures, those wounds.

I gave you two reasons that Jesus showed his hands and side to the disciples – so that they'd know he was real, and so that they would recognize him. Jesus is recognized in his weakness. There are two more reasons.

3. I think that Jesus showed them his wounds so that they would know that he sees *their trauma* and *their wounds*. This was maybe his way of saying “I know you are hurting and hiding here, I see your pain, I see your fear, I see your hurt.” His wounds become a mirror to their wounds. When we look at the cross, when we look at the scars of Jesus, we can see our own pain, our own fear, our own failure, our own suffering. Can you see your suffering in Jesus who suffered? Maybe not exactly the same, but something of what you are experiencing? Can you imagine being known by that, and by it being redeemed?

Jesus made himself known by his scars. It's interesting — those in the Recovery Community do too. They will say something like “I'm Bill and I'm an alcoholic.”

4. The 4th reason is so that they can see through his wounds, and past their own pain to the suffering of others.

Yesterday was the funeral for Pope Francis. All week long the tributes to this amazing man have been pouring in. In an interview I heard with a Bishop from Quebec, the bishop said the late Pope was always pointing to and going towards the edges and the margins. Going to the peripheries was the hallmark of his papacy. The Pope wanted to be with those who were on the margins financially or socially, with migrants, with those caught up in war. The Pope kept going to and pointing to and caring for people who were weak and struggling, who were oppressed: from ensuring a homeless shelter was created in a Jesuit-owned building in Vatican City just a few hundred meters from St. Peter's Square, and to calling the parish in Gaza *every night* since the war's outbreak a year and a half ago, to calling out as unjust the deportation of refugees in the United States.

The description about Pope Francis that I like the most is that *he was a shepherd who smelled like the sheep, including the sheep who were hurting and shoved aside*.

Jesus came to the disciples *where they were*, locked in and afraid. He showed them his hands and his side, and then he breathed on them. He said “*As the Father has sent me,*

so I send you." He filled them with the Holy Spirit, he empowered them and sent them out — out of their fear, out beyond their own suffering into a world of suffering.



That's why the cross is the major symbol of the church. We are always reminded of the suffering and death of Jesus so that we can see his great love for all who suffer, and see his love for us and his love for others.

The British museum acquired a simple work of art, a cross made by the Italian carpenter Francesco Tuccio. The cross is called the Lampedusa cross. It is made from a boat wreck.

The boat was carrying more than [500 refugees from Eritrea and Somalia](#), when it caught fire, capsized and sank off the coast of the Island of Lampedusa. Only 151 people survived. The carpenter met some of the survivors in his local church who were Eritrean Christians fleeing from persecution. He felt like he wanted to help them somehow, so he collected wood from their boat and made each of them a cross as a symbol of hope. The carpenter also made a cross for Pope Francis to carry at a memorial service for the disaster.

Did you hear that though? He gave them each a part of that boat — that boat that was a thing of horror, trauma, loss, disaster ... and he made from it crosses. The cross was an object of horror, trauma, loss, failure. It makes no sense! Except it does.

Jesus transformed the cross, and it became a symbol of hope. Jesus willingly and in great love went to that cross and took on those wounds for those survivors, those who didn't survive, for us, for you and for this broken world.

The Risen Christ walks on wounded feet, and his beloved church serves a broken world with wounded hands. 1 Peter 2: 24 says "***By his wounds you have been healed.***" It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but the deep and amazing Truth is that together we will bring healing to individuals and healing to the world. Jesus is, and we his church are, scarred for Life.

Thanks be to God. Amen.