

## Homily for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

On October 5, 1938, a young nun named Sr. Faustina Kowalska died in at a convent in Krakow, Poland. She was the third of ten children, who came from a very poor family that had struggled hard on their little farm during the terrible years of World War I. As a result, she only had three years of a very simple education. After initial attempts to join the religious life, she was eventually accepted by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, at the age of 20. At the convent, she was relegated to rather menial tasks, usually in the kitchen or the vegetable garden, or as a greeter at the front door.

But in February 1931, after being in the convent for less than five years, everything changed in Sr. Faustina's life. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself began appearing to her with rays of light radiating from His heart. He said to her, "Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature, 'Jesus, I trust in You'. The Lord then went on to say, "I desire that this image be venerated first in your chapel, and throughout the world. The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water, which makes souls righteous [baptism]. The red ray stands for the Blood, which is the life of souls [the Eucharist]. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was opened by a lance on the Cross." This image is known as the Divine Mercy image, a copy of which can be seen in the area of the baptismal font to your right.

Canonized a saint in 2000, Faustina recorded in her diary the content of the many appearances of Jesus to her and the conversations they had. In § 1184 of her diary entitled, *Divine Mercy in my Soul*, she writes the following: “In the evening, I saw the Lord Jesus upon the cross. From His hands, feet, and side the Most Sacred Blood was flowing. After some time, Jesus said to me, ‘All this is for the salvation of souls... And when it seems to you that your suffering exceeds your strength, contemplate My wounds, and you will rise above human scorn and judgment.’”

The wounds of Jesus. Of course on Good Friday, the day Jesus died on the cross, we meditated on His great suffering for us – in particular the wounds from the nails that pierced His hands and feet. These were signs of His passion and death. But, if they were indeed signs of His passion and death, then why do they still appear on His body after His resurrection? We just heard in the Gospel today, which took place on the very evening of Easter Sunday: “On the evening of that first day of the week...Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side...Now Thomas...was not with them when Jesus came. So...he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’” In other words, even though Jesus defeated sin and death, He did not shun or hide the very wounds that killed Him. Why? Because it was those very wounds that saved us and healed us! And these scars are the proof – the proof that Jesus really died because He really loved us, and that He is really risen from the dead!

When we think about it, though, we all have scars. Some are physical – like this one I have on my head from when I fell down the steps at my grandmother’s house as a kid, not once, but twice! It’s more fun to tell that story now than back then! Other scars are hidden – emotional wounds from the past – the marks from the people and situations that have hurt us.

The thing about scars is that they’re conversation starters – there’s a story behind each and every scar – a “war story”. In the case of Jesus, it was His passion, death, and resurrection to save us from our sins. But our scars have stories to tell too. But, that story can tell one of two tales. It can speak of the bitterness of what someone did wrong to us, and the resulting anger and unforgiveness that we still hold on to. Or, it can be the story of a journey of letting go of that hurtful past, letting Jesus heal the wounds those scars represent.

Let me tell you a lesson that the Lord has taught me. When you get a cut – if you don’t clean it out, and it tries to start healing, infection might set in. Then, the old wound may need to be opened and cleaned out so it can properly heal. The same is true with wounds of the spiritual, emotional, and psychological sort. Time may go by, and a rough, callous exterior – a scab – might develop as a form of protection. But, deep down, unless God’s mercy has touched that old wound, it will just continue to fester. The thing is, you can actually get used to that festering wound – learning to tolerate it – because, after all many of us don’t like to go to the doctor, do we? But then, the infection just gets progressively worse. The only way to really heal it is to be brave and open up that old wound – whether it’s a memory, a feeling, or a thought – and invite Jesus, the Divine Physician, in to heal it.

My friends, this is why we need Confession. We need to risk being open and vulnerable with God about our past so that He can clear out the infection of resentment, anger, hurt, perhaps even rage, and let the healing begin. And healing, which culminates with a peaceful attitude toward the past, is the fruit of this hard work. Real peace! God has taught me this lesson. And yes, scars will often develop after wounds are healed. But with God, those scars are no longer reminders of a hurtful past, but of a great and mighty healing He has worked in our lives. Just look at Jesus' wounds from Good Friday, and you know the rest of the story. God bless you.