

April 24, 2022 (Focus: John 20: 19-23) Second Sunday of Easter

In being very real today, not afraid to show us his wounds, Jesus offers us a way to see ourselves—flaws and mended places and very much beloved.

There is a pottery technique that originated in Japan called Kintsugi (or Kintsukuroi). Kintsugi is the art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. In repairing a break in a piece of pottery like a bowl or cup or tea pot, there is no attempt to hide the crack or break, but instead to emphasize it with precious metals.

In this way, the breakage and repair are respected as part of the history of the object rather than something to disguise or hide. The flaw, the imperfection are embraced, not hidden. The cracks and repairs are simply events in the life of the object; there is no need to end the service of the object if it is damaged or broken. This art of kintsugi is in line with the philosophy of mushin, or “no mind,” which encompasses the concepts of non-attachment, that is, acceptance of change and fate as aspects of every human life.

Our scars, our wrinkles, our grey hairs, they are part of our history; they are signs that we have lived. So too are the scars that do not show on the outsides of our bodies, the scars on our spirits and our hearts. The losses we have lived through and live with, the disappointments, the struggles, the doubts, the regrets—they all leave scars on us too. They are our memories; they are part of our history, and we bring those memories into our present and our future.

And for some, they have been made to feel shame about the scars they bear, so much so that all they see and feel is flaw and brokenness. Even though we all have struggles and flaws and moments of brokenness, we seem to forget that when we point

the finger at another and magnify their brokenness, their struggles, their flaws, and assess shame to them.

But Jesus says, "Peace be with you." He does not say this just to perfect people; he says this first to people scarred by what they have experienced, ashamed of their cowardice, broken by their fears and doubts. And to all that, what does Jesus say? "Peace be with you." Not chastisement, not punishment, not rejection, not shame, not a litany of all their faults and shortcomings as his followers, but "Peace be with you."

It's as if with his offer of peace he is soothing the psychological and spiritual scars his disciples have suffered as of late. In showing his wounds, he is telling them "I understand what it means to be wounded body and spirit; and such scars are nothing to be ashamed of; I don't hide mine, and you don't have to hide yours." Jesus is not going to let the oppressive actions of the empire and the cowardly actions of its minions define him and cause him to hide his scars in shame. In showing his scars and offering them peace, it's as if Jesus has mended their broken spirits with gold and made them whole again.

This is the power of God's love and grace: not to keep us from struggles, and not to glorify struggles, but to journey with us through the dark valleys that life entails sometimes and to mend us and strengthen us and to let us know that even with the scars we bear from our struggles, we are beloved. And yes, even scarred and imperfect followers are called to go out into the world and do God's work in the world, work that we should take very seriously, for if we don't offer the love and grace we have received, then we can cause scars on other spirits and souls. If we cannot love and help and forgive and accept and respect, then others are not healed, their wounds are left open. And this damages us both. But if we can love and help and forgive and

accept and respect others and offer them the peace offered to us, then all are blessed.

Our lives are not easy. All humans are susceptible to the unknowns of life, and the struggles of life. And life's unknowns and life's struggles all make their mark on us just as the daily use of a tea pot or a cup brings about breaks, chips, wear and tear. And God's love and grace help mend us, as Jesus reminds us in his own scars and the peace he offers us. God's love and grace help mend us, they are the gold that hold us together. And that is good news for us today.

A Blessing of the Scars

Have the congregants place a hand on a scar on their bodies – from the healed cuts on their heads to the healed incisions on their abdomens or hips. If they do not have any, or don't feel comfortable doing so, they can place a hand on a knee or elbow for the times they fell as a child or adult.

Divine Stitcher- Your healing Spirit encircles us in our times of illness and injury and grief. This Spirit unifies the divides in our skin and comforts the pain in our wounds. Bless the spots of healing on our bodies. May we remember you who sat with us as these scrapes and incisions were tender and each day as they mended. May we see beauty in these marks on our bodies, for they represent the healing you intend. In the name of the one who shows us his scars and offers us peace, we pray. Amen.

Let us turn our hearts and souls again to God in prayer. Loving Creator, we are grateful for this new day, clouds and sun after some life-giving rain, and whatever else today might bring, blessings all. As we go through our routines, as we rest and work and play, help us to be mindful from time to time that the spirit of the Risen Lord is with us, blessing us, offering us new life in God's love and grace.

The risen living Christ continues to go before us, and we follow, but like his first disciples, we too sometimes have doubts. Help us not to feel shame over these doubts. Help us to recognize that doubts are a part of the journey of faith, so long as we don't get so stuck in our doubts that they are a barrier to living a life of faith. Help us always to seek help in our doubts, to rely on our faith community to help us negotiate such spiritual roadblocks. Help this faith community to be one that always welcomes and supports and nurtures the doubter in their faith journey, for we remember what it is like, and we know some words and deeds that can help someone find the path ahead again.

There are so many among us, in our community, and in the world in need of your healing compassion and care – grant all in need an experience of your renewing touch, especially...

Silent prayer/meditation

Gracious and loving God, mysterious and wondrous and holy, bless us today and in the days ahead. Help us to feel your peace, even amid the drama and chaos of life. Help us to proclaim in word and deed that we walk with the living Christ. Help us to shout out our Alleluias as we rejoice in the good news you offer us and all creation. In your holy name we pray, as Jesus taught us to pray to you, saying,... Amen.