

Have you any wounds? I mean a physical wound. Big or small. Maybe you got your appendix out? In addition to my appendix wound, I also have a little scar on my second smallest finger on my left hand. It reminds me of happy days as a kid growing up in West Belfast. I got this little scar from catching my hand on glass climbing over the wall between the City cemetery and the Falls park in West Belfast, as a few mates and myself were running from some mischief. They were carefree days and the blood ran rich and free. There were no concerns then about blood pressure or sugar level. When I think about wounds I think about my Dad. When we were small children he went off to work in the bakery one morning and around midday when they were clearing up to go home he had an accident. Like most accidents it was very simple. He was leaning down into a large bowl- like container, wiping it clean. It was in this that the milk, flour, eggs and other ingredients for making the bread were mixed. It spun on a wheel. As my Dad leant down into it, his knee accidentally hit a button and a blade shot across cutting through his hand. The months of hospital and surgery and various medical appointments, not to mention the loss of his job had a huge impact on him and us.

Twenty five years later, the night he left us, too soon at sixty-one, after a valiantly fought battle with pancreatic cancer, I encountered his wounds again. This time I saw them in their entirety and understood them better. Five wounds in all. Like Jesus. The wounds of Jesus, his hands, his feet, and his side where the lance pierced. My Dad's wounds were different. There was his hand, his wound in his tummy where they inserted his hand to keep the nerve endings alive, his cancer wound, his appendix wound and the wound on his legs where they took a skin graft again for his hand. As I looked at his lifeless body I observed the wounds and thought of two things. I thought of his various sufferings and I thought of the immense love he had for us. There was a real gentleness in him and yet beside that a toughness. A sort of tender warrior.

Of course many of our wounds are not physical, though those that are not, are certainly no less deep or significant. Many of us carry the wounds of abuse or loss. Perhaps the scars of rejection or abandonment. Many live in the darkness of depression or the slavery of addiction. Sometimes these things are made worse by the lack of understanding on the part of others. What many fail to realise is that in all these things Jesus has something to say. For example Jesus says, 'Come to me all you labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest,' These are beautiful words, but do they fall on deaf ears? Do we actually go to Jesus with our burdens? Oftentimes we go everywhere else except Jesus.

Has Jesus anything to say to us in our woundedness? It may well be that he speaks to us, in the silent agony of his own wounds. The answer to all the torture and suffering that he endured is the triumph of the Empty Tomb. The Empty Tomb on Easter Sunday morning is the victory Jesus has over his wounds, his suffering and his death. Put simply, wounds are changed by Jesus. All wounds can now be seen in the context of the wounded Jesus. Jesus is the Wounded One. He did not deserve his wounds and yet he chose to accept them. He freely accepted them and all the suffering that they entailed. The reason he took on all the suffering and ultimately the Cross, is spelt out to us at Mass. Jesus suffers Calvary for the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of our sins. In our common woundedness we are united with Jesus in a very special way. Perhaps to look at it this way will help: the Cross was a cruel instrument of torture until the body of Jesus hung on it. After he dies on the Cross it ceases to be the instrument of torture and becomes the great hope, the great comfort of humanity. The Cross is now the gateway to paradise. So to the wounds are no longer simply wounds, but channels of God's grace that wash away our sins and also carry to us God's grace, or special help, to live a full and happy life. As people of faith let us remember that whatever our wounds are, we need to reflect on them in the context of the Wounded One who beats all suffering and death forever. That is not only good news, it is the best news!