

The second Sunday of Easter or as some call it, "Divine Mercy Sunday," brings the story of St. Thomas.

Thomas means so much to me, as he brought Jesus and his message to my country of India. I was born and brought up in a town only 20 miles from the place where he landed.

The story of Thomas is phenomenal. Like everyone else, Thomas was in pain after the events of the Holy Week. He was searching for answers.

The day he decided to skip the company of the rest of the apostles, Jesus appeared to them in the Upper Room and the disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." And Thomas response was, "You must be kidding."

And then his classic response: "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Thomas had seen his Master bruised and beaten, crucified on the cross. And so, he wanted to see and touch and feel those wounds. Yes, the wounds of Jesus!

Pope Francis preached, "Jesus' wounds are essential for believing in God. Not for believing that God exists, but for believing that God is love, mercy and faithfulness."

So on this second Sunday of Easter, this Mercy Sunday, let us draw grace and love from the wounds of the Master.

Imagine for moment, what kind of God would Jesus be anyway if he wasn't familiar with our wounds? He wouldn't comprehend human suffering.

His wounds show us that God is in touch with the world. That God is in touch with our brokenness.

That is why Thomas was adamant in feeling the wounds of Jesus post-resurrection because he needed to know Jesus understood his own pain.

William Ovens was inspired to write the first verse of a hymn after World War I. As he saw a wounded veteran limping past him on the street, he thought, "He was wounded for me," which inspired him to write this verse of a Hymn, "Wounded for me, Wounded for me; There on the cross, He was wounded for me; Gone my transgressions, and now I am free; All because Jesus was wounded for me."

Have you ever thought of God as wounded? In a society that considers vulnerability as weakness, and constantly tries to hide scars, it is hard to conceive God in his woundedness.

As Jesus walked to Mount Calvary, legend has it that a woman, named Berenice in Greek but Veronica in Latin, walked with him at a distance.

As she watched him carrying the cross, she saw His face broken and bruised with wounds all over. Whereas most would turn away from such a ghastly sight, she takes off her veil and wipes Jesus' face with it.

An astonishingly intimate act, maybe even more intimate than Mary of Bethany wiping Jesus feet with her hair as this act is out in the open, surrounded by a hostile crowd. The legend says that this woman, Veronica, came away with an image of Christ on her veil.

The name Veronica in Latin means 'true image'. She bears the image of Christ. This woman with two names, Berenice, meaning bearer of victory, and Veronica meaning 'true image' – she carries with her the true image of Christ victorious, the image of the crucified Christ.

A small, but beautiful and memorable act of mercy – not recorded in the gospels, but that has captured the hearts of Christians down the centuries.

What is the true image that God has gifted to Veronica? It is an image of God in his woundedness. An image that speaks about a God who is in touch with the world and its brokenness or wounds!

There is another story that has been repeated many times. A reporter watched Mother Teresa of Calcutta as she cleaned the maggot-infested wound of a man on the street, only to say, "I wouldn't do what you do for a million dollars."

Mother Teresa is supposed to have replied, immediately, with a bit of a wry smile, "I wouldn't either." Mother Teresa and her nuns would wipe clean and minister to the people with wounds on the streets all around the

world, because she and her nuns see the face Jesus wounded, bruised and broken on those less fortunate people.

God lives in our midst in those who are broken or wounded.

Believe me, you are not going to see the Risen Jesus in all his glory with light emanating from him this season. Even the disciples after resurrection did not see him in all His glory.

But you WILL see him in the stranger who joined them on the road to Emmaus, or in the person who has baked fish for them on the ocean side as the disciples returned empty from a night of fishing... or as Mother Teresa and many like her would see and minister day after day, in those with real wounds in the real world!

On Monday, we will see and minister to Jesus in the homeless that will join our community through the Winter Nights program.

We will cook dinner for them, clean the facilities and restrooms, tutor their children and entertain the families.

Why? Because they are Jesus in our midst. If you want to know and see and minister to Jesus wounded and broken, read Mathew 25... I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, in prison, naked.

This Easter season, let us go out there and see the face of God in our brothers and sisters with real wounds in our society.

I would like to conclude with a prayer from St. Faustina:

“Help me, O Lord,

...that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and be of help to them;

... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbors' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;

... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;

... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;

... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbor, despite my own fatigue and weariness;

... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbor” (Diary, 163).

