

## *How Does Jesus' Death Save Us?*

What do the following phrases mean to you?

Jesus Christ died for my sins.

We are saved through the blood of the Cross.

By the merits of his passion death and resurrection, salvation has been won for us.

By his death on the cross, Jesus paid the debt incurred by my sins.

These familiar phrases are at the heart of Christianity's claim that salvation comes to us through the death of Jesus Christ. After all, isn't that why we call Good Friday "*good*" in the first place? Indeed, isn't this why we call the gospel "*good news*"? Rarely, however, do we take the time to reflect upon this central claim of Christianity. What do we mean when we say that Jesus saves? What does he save me from? How does his death on the cross bring about my salvation?

Our Christian tradition has answered these questions in various ways. Theology is an attempt to take these affirmations of faith and seek a deeper understanding of the truth which underlies these affirmations. Perhaps the most familiar interpretation of the saving effects of Christ's crucifixion comes to us in a theory that has been known as "punitive substitution" or "satisfaction of divine justice." These phrases sound rather imposing, and so, at the risk of trivializing this interpretation of the Calvary event, allow me to explain this understanding by way of a story.

Once upon a time, God the Father created the heavens and the earth. He put Adam and Eve on this earth as the first human beings, endowed with the wonderful gifts of knowledge and free will. In their freedom, Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandment of God and, as a result, offended God in his infinite justice. There must be some kind of payment or satisfaction made for this sin against God's justice. The penalty for such an infinite offense against the divine majesty is death. Since the offense is immense, no human being can make up for the debt that has been incurred because of that first sin. Therefore, the gates of heaven remain eternally closed and we must suffer the consequences of that first sin by being eternally separated from God.

Such is the plan of the Father when the Son intercedes and says to the Father, "I will go to earth as a human being, and in the name of all human beings, I will offer you the perfect sacrifice in atonement for their sin. Since I will be the pure and spotless lamb, innocent and without sin, I can offer a pure sacrifice to you in appeasement of your infinite wrath. I will pay the debt incurred by Adam's sin.

This explanation might sound familiar to you. Because of this understanding, we say, "Jesus died for my sins." "He paid the debt of Adam's sin." "His death on the cross opened up for us the gates of heaven." This theory of the redemption has much to

commend itself: it seems to make sense of certain passages which we find in the scripture. Consider some of the following passages of scripture:

"Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life." [Romans 5:10]

"For if, by the transgression of one person [Adam], death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ." [Romans 5:17]

"You who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through his death, to present you holy, without blemish, and irreproachable before him." [Col. 1:20-22]

"But this one (Christ) offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God." [Hebrews 10:12]

"For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God." [1 Peter 3:18]

"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, [Rev. 1:5]

Looking at these passages from scripture, and reading them from the point of view of the "theory of satisfaction," we come to the conclusion that Jesus offers to God a sacrifice that appeases the divine wrath incurred by the debt of sin. His *bloody* sacrifice satisfies the demands of divine justice. However, let us look at the image of God that is evoked by this understanding.

First of all, we need to ask, "Does sin *offend* God? If we have to speak about God in human terms and ascribe certain emotional states to the Almighty, is offense an adequate term? Does God get offended in the same way that we feel hurt by someone's transgression against us? Doesn't the word "offend" conjure up for us images of God pouting and brooding over our trespasses? Thinking about God as eternally offended creates a state of shame in all of us. How many times have we had the experience of finding ourselves almost paralyzed to undo the wrong which we have done against someone whom we have offended. If you forgot to call Aunt Mae on her birthday, how hard it is to pick up the phone to call her on Christmas -- and how much more difficult to make that reconciliatory call with each successive holiday! Similarly, if I feel that I am constantly offending God by my misdeeds, how could I ever get on his good side? My ever-growing feeling of shame even further alienates me from God -- I can never make God happy, so why bother!

In my own spiritual journey, I prefer to see sin not as an offense against God's infinite justice but as a disappointment in God's dream and vision for his daughters and sons. In other words, it seems to me that God is not so much offended by sin but disappointed that I have not chosen his vision for me and for his creation. God is a lover, an infinitely compassionate and forgiving lover. If we were to ascribe human emotions to God at all, it seems to me that this lover-God would feel disappointment more than he might feel offended by those obstacles in my path to spiritual and emotional growth.

Secondly, the theory of satisfaction as we have explained above seems to put God in a kind of dilemma. He has to punish us for our offenses, but, in his heart, he really doesn't want to punish us! Satisfaction for sin, however, has to be made. This dilemma, however, is easily enough removed when we stop looking at God from the point of view of his being a Supreme Court justice who is looking for a loophole in the law in order to get us off the hook. Once again, if we remove from our minds the image of God the judge, we no longer have to try to figure out how this God has to work out our salvation and still satisfy the demands of justice. Instead of judge, let us look at our Father who seeks to heal his children who choose unhealthy (that is unholy) ways of living in this world.

The fact is, it would seem to me that God doesn't simply want to acquit us, he wants to heal us *now and in this life, freeing us from the obstacles that keep us from having true peace and serenity*. If you take the idea of acquittal to its extreme, then it would seem that it doesn't really matter how I live my life in this world; in the end, I am going to be acquitted for all my crimes and misdeeds anyway! Some evangelical forms of Christianity have so stressed the idea of acquittal that it seems to rob the deeds and actions of this life of their significance. In the end, I am going to be washed clean by the blood of the Lamb! Some evangelical Christians say, "When I am judged by God the Almighty, he looks at me through glasses that have been blood-stained by the sacrifice of his son. While I deserve eternal damnation, I receive eternal reward because of the merits of his sacrifice." As long as I have "saving faith," I am acquitted in the end. But does it really matter, then, how I live my life in the present?

It seems to me that God does take this present world seriously. While he desires that we live with him in communion forever in heaven, he also desires that we might be able to experience that heavenly communion even here on earth. If the significance of the ministry of Jesus were reduced simply to his one act of perfect sacrifice in atonement for our sins, then the only important act of his public ministry was his death on the cross. If that were the case, however, we might rightly wonder why the Son even engaged in a public ministry at all before his one perfect sacrifice. The economy of salvation might well have been worked out had Jesus been slaughtered by Herod in his infancy along with all the other innocents, as recounted in the second chapter of Matthew. However, it would seem that in the plan of salvation, the public ministry of Jesus is indeed important; his miracles and his teaching reflected the Father's desire to heal us, to free us from those

obstacles that keep us from experiencing wholeness within.

The discussion about the death of Jesus, therefore, must shift from categories of justice and divine judgment to categories of healing and wholeness. It seems that the entire ministry of Jesus was so directed toward healing and freeing others. When Jesus first appears in Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry, he unrolls the scroll from the book of the prophet Isaiah and reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." [Luke 4: 18-19] Rolling up the scroll, Jesus sits down and begins his address with the following words: "Today, these words are fulfilled in your hearing them." If this is the announcement of his program of action, does it not make sense that his death and the meaning and purpose of that death, would be consonant with his entire life-ministry of healing and liberation? Thus, I believe that the question with which we began this discussion might be better phrased, "How does the death of Jesus bring me *healing*? How does his death on the cross heal me within this present sinful state.

Let us first look at the meaning of the words, "present sinful state." The Bible makes it clear that we are born into a broken world. We can look around our world in its present state of bigotry, war, violence, injustice, starvation, sickness and disease and see the brokenness that is there. Some of this brokenness is there because of our own bad choices; some of the brokenness is there because of the choices that have been made by generations upon generations previous to us. In short, all of us are both victims and perpetrators. Because we have been hurt by the bad choices of others, we pass on that hurt. Sometimes our reactions are thought out -- other times they are impulsive -- still others totally unconscious. To spend energy to try to determine our own responsibility and culpability in the midst of all this is to become horribly sidetracked in an endless effort to discover how much of my present state am I responsible for bringing on. Some people might even fear asking that question; the fear of shame and guilt drives us from even looking at our brokenness for the fear that maybe we might convict ourselves as *guilty*.

You see, to look at our present situation from a juridical point of view, seeking to know our own culpability and responsibility, scrupulously dissecting when we are acting like sheep and when like goats, is to miss the point. God isn't looking for someone to hang the blame on. He is looking to heal us. However, if we perceive God as some kind of a judge, then we are going to spend an awful lot of energy either covering up our wrongdoing or looking for someone to take the blame. Remember the story of Adam and Eve? The book of Genesis gives a wonderfully profound lesson in the religious psychology of sin when it describes what happens to Adam and Eve after their transgression. After Adam and Eve sin, they sew fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. When God looks for them in the garden of Eden, Adam says to the Lord, "I

heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." [Genesis 3:10] Then, when God confronts Adam with the fact that he has transgressed and has eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam says, "It wasn't my fault -- it was that woman *you* made who gave me the fruit." When God confronts Eve, she is quick to pass the blame on to the serpent. And so, there are the first two consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve -- hiding and blaming.

The hiding from shame and the blaming of others seem to be our initial response to our broken situation. Certainly, if we see God in the category of "judge," we will desperately either run away from the judge or try to convince the judge that it wasn't my fault in the first place. How much easier it would be if we could just see God as the healer who wants to take this sin-infected broken situation of ours and bring a wholeness and a healing into our lives.

The question then is, "How does the death of Jesus bring healing into this sin-infected situation of ours?" The first place that I would suggest we look is a rather unlikely place -- with the Jewish people in exodus from Egypt. The book of Numbers tells an interesting event that happens to the Jewish people in the Sinai peninsula. At a certain point in their journey, the people of Israel encounter these saraph serpents whose bite is quite fatal. God commands Moses to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. We are then told that whenever anyone who was bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent he recovered. Isn't it interesting that the cure came by looking at the very thing that caused the pain in the first place? Yet, once again, there is a profound lesson to be learned here. Our natural reaction to anything that causes us pain is to run away. No one naturally wants to confront the source of pain in their lives. Yet, the "cure" which God offers to the people of Israel in the desert is to confront the fear -- look at that very thing that brings such pain into our lives.

Much of the pain of our life comes from a sense of shame -- a fear that in some way I am not lovable, I am not good, I am, not acceptable or respectable. Shame is the experience of not belonging -- of being cut off and shut out because of some fundamental flaw or defect that we fear lies within. It is the belief (or perhaps fear) that deep down I am "rotten to the core." Much has been written about the sources of shame in our life -- the ways in which we have been made to feel that we are a mistake, that we do not matter, that we do not belong, etc. It is not my attempt to explore the many causes of shame in our life; suffice it to say that shame exists and we, like Adam and Eve, do all in our power not to expose that shame either to ourselves or to others. So much of our human wrongdoing, our misdeeds and sins, arise from that inability to deal with that shadow side of the self. Of course the best defense is a good offense -- that shame-based core is protected through a whole arsenal of psychological defenses that can and do offend others. In other words, many of the "sins of commission," the hurts we pass on to others, stem from the desire (whether conscious or unconscious) to cover over our own sense of shame.

In examining some of these "defenses," it will become apparent how many of our misdeeds arise from that desire to cover up our shame. A whole class of actions that can fall under the category of addictions are ways that the shame-based person anesthetizes the pain of feeling somehow defective. Alcohol and drugs are obvious analgesics that numb the pain of shame. However, there are less obvious addictions that in some way alter our moods and help us deal with the fear that, deep in the core of our being, we are somewhat defective. Eating disorders, sexual addictions, compulsive shopping, workaholism, perfectionism -- each of these behaviors are symptoms of a drive to numb the pain of our own shame-based core. In the past we may have confessed some of these excessive behaviors because we saw how they affected the quality of life of those around us. Rarely, however, do we take the opportunity to see that the inappropriate behavior is a shame-covering defense. The behavior, in other words, is a symptom that there is a need for that shame-based person to be healed.

Another defense against feeling the shame of inadequacy is the psychological mechanism called "projection." How often we project onto others the very defects of personality that we fear reside deep within the shadowy recesses of the self. We can become so righteous in our condemnation of the very same faults that exist within ourselves. If we find ourselves to be excessively critical and judgmental of others, it may be because I am desperately trying to cover my own shame. Sadly, some people can even obsessively want to destroy the other for they, in some way, remind us of that shadow side of ourselves of which we are so desperately ashamed. And so the pain continues -- the unhealed pain within ourselves, and the pain which is passed on to others through loathing and rejection.

Another defense mechanism that keeps us from feeling shame takes the form of hypersensitivity. The hypersensitive person can be so convinced that others are "the enemy" and that people in general are trying to expose one's shame and inadequacy. Hypersensitivity can take many forms: the person who will never forget a past hurt, holding onto grudges forever, the person who becomes excessively angry with people who offer constructive criticism, the person who goes into a rage over the imperfections that manifest themselves at work or home. On the outside, a hypersensitive person just seems to lack compassion for the weaknesses they perceive in others; in actuality, they lack total compassion for the inadequacies that they fear are within themselves.

As we mentioned above, the two consequences of that original sin of Adam and Eve was to cover their shame and to lay the blame on others. Blaming others is another way we deal with the inner shame of our lives. Someone else is responsible for creating the mess that I fear lies within. It is obvious how blaming others, making excuses, and finding a scapegoat are ways of not taking responsibility for our own lives. In our tradition, we have called these "sins of omission." We are reminded of the parable which Jesus told concerning the king who divided his property among his servants and went on a journey. Two of the servants invested what was given to them and, as a result of their enterprising

labors, they double the money invested. One servant, however, buries the money, handing it back to the master upon his return with the excuse: "Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back." [Matthew 25:24-25] As long as I can find someone to blame, I don't have to take risks or responsibility for my life.

Sadly, many people think that certain forms of recovery work are nothing more than finding excuses and laying the blame on others in the past to explain my present debilitated state. Many people think that present "buzz" words such as "wounded inner child" or "dysfunctional family of origin" are nothing more than attempts to find a scapegoat from the past who will take the rap for my presently disordered state of affairs. **Such is not the case at all.** All recovery work is an attempt to liberate and heal; it is not an attempt to find the guilty person upon whose shoulders I can lay the blame for all my present ills. It is to see how destructive patterns in the past still play a decisive role in how I react to the present moment. Understanding toxic patterns in the past can help me to seek freedom; understanding can make me sensitive to the real choices that I do have in the present moment to break free from those destructive patterns. In other words, recovery is not about finding someone to blame -- it is the pathway that encourages me to take responsibility for the present moment.

What we have been saying thus far is that the issue of "shame" has much to do with the present sinful state. Because of past wounds, I can easily be led to believe that I am defective, "rotten to the core." Just as Adam and Eve covered their shame and immediately began to lay the blame on each other (and the serpent), so too my sins of commission as well as the sins of omission are destructive responses to that state of defectiveness which I fear lies within. Sin not only needs to be forgiven, but the core reality needs to be healed. In other words, I need to look fearlessly within and discover that, despite the mistakes which I have made because of my human limitations, I am still a beloved, precious child of the Father. I need to see that there is nothing to be ashamed of merely because I am human being. I need to allow self-hatred to become transformed into self-love. I have to fearlessly look at those serpents that are not giving me (and consequently others) a moment's worth of peace.

How are we healed in this shame-based state? How do we stop running away from the serpents and look upon those very things that cause such pain in our lives? Jesus himself offers the solution in a passage which clearly reflects the situation that the Jewish people faced in the Sinai desert. In the eighth chapter of John, Jesus says, "For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins. . . . When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him." [John 8:24, 28-29] Jesus is speaking of his own crucifixion, that moment when, like the bronze serpent, he is lifted up. This is the

supreme moment of revelation of both human brokenness and divine compassion. Let us look at both aspects of the crucifixion: human brokenness and divine compassion.

That Jesus was broken on the cross is fairly obvious. Countless number of Good Friday sermons over the years have brought the pain of Calvary to our attention! We are certainly aware of all the physical pain -- the scourging, the crown of thorns, the weight of the cross, the nails. The physical pain, however, is only a part of the total agony of the God-man. He is deserted by his closest friends, betrayed by a member of the inner circle, condemned by religious leaders in the name of God, ridiculed by the crowds, mocked by the soldiers, totally stripped of his clothing, and executed with common thieves. Not a shred of dignity is left to him. The ultimate experience of emptiness, however, is the moment of spiritual desolation as he struggles to take in each successive life breath. *Eli, Eli lama sabachthani* -- "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" No longer is God called upon as *Abba*, in that familiar and intimate address which Jesus so tenderly taught his disciples in prayer. He is addressed as *El* -- GOD, a more severe and formal address to the deity. Jesus is not play-acting here while retreating into some divinity-charged recess of the mind which would assure him "Everything is going to be O.K." This is utter abandonment -- the very absence of any God-comfort in his hour of death.

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians "For our sake he (God the Father) made him (Christ) to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him." In a very concise way, St. Paul expresses the meaning of the Calvary event. The sinless Christ was made "sin"; what in the world does that mean? Sin, for St. Paul, is more than just a transgression against the law of God -- it is the state of God-alienation, the state which Jesus experienced in his moment of desolation and abandonment. In modern terms, we might use the phrase "state of shame." If, in the moment of his baptism, Jesus heard his Father's words, "You are my beloved son on whom my favor rests," now, at the place called "the Skull" Jesus hears silence. At the very core of his own identity is his beloved sonship. Shame, however, robs us of our identity, and indeed Jesus enters into that state of shame. Elsewhere, St. Paul uses the word "curse" to describe the experience of the cross. He writes, "Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree.'" [Galatians 3:13]

How does the healing come through the cross of Christ? I mentioned above that the cross of Christ is both, at the same time, the sign of human brokenness as well as divine compassion. Jesus freely and lovingly enters into that state of shame, that state of human brokenness, so that we, who experience shame in our lives, no longer need to hide and run away. The act of Calvary is healing because it is an act of love -- God in Christ freely entering into our moments of desolation and abandonment. You are never alone! In the creed we profess: "He descended into hell." When I am in those moments of hell, those moments of fearing and feeling flawed and defective, there in the midst of that horrible space is Christ himself -- as love.

The cross is truly the greatest pulpit from which Christ preached his greatest words -- his seven last words. In each of these words there is an invitation to let go of the fear that prevents us from making that inward journey -- to look upon the crucified one and know that it is safe to journey within. To those who feel the shame of past misdeeds, Jesus declares, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they are doing." To those who feel ashamed of their own human desires, who feel that they can never express their needs or desires, Jesus cries out "I thirst." To those who feel that they could never merit the reward of everlasting life unless they are perfect, Jesus says to a *thief*, "This day you will be with me in Paradise." To those who fear that they do not belong, that they don't fit in, that they do not deserve a healing, intimate relationship in their lives, Jesus says, "Woman, behold your son -- son, behold your mother." To those who cannot accept their own failures and their own inability to achieve perfect results each and every time, Jesus declares, "It is accomplished." To those who fear that they have to do it alone, that life is one big enterprise of self-control, Jesus prays, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

These words are the words of divine compassion. They are the words that tell me it is safe to look at my own fears, safe to look at my own inadequacies, safe to look at my own needs, safe to look at my own desire to control and shape my shame-covering activity -- safe because at the heart of my own personhood is the divine reality I AM. In other words, Jesus exposes his own shame on the cross but at the same time reveals the divine promise that, despite it all, we are never truly abandoned. Instead, we are embraced by God *as we are*. As we said above, Jesus declares, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone." The divine name which Jesus invokes, I AM, is the shorthand form of Yahweh. More than conjugating the verb "to be," and even more than declaring his divine identity, Jesus is saying that in the moment of crucifixion, in those moments when you feel the entire weight of your own shame-based reality, you will experience the embrace of the Father. The divine name of Yahweh has been understood by some scholars to be a form of the verb "to be" which might be translated, "I, the Almighty, am present here and now to save." The name Yahweh sums up the very first pronouncement which God makes to Moses in the theophany of the burning bush: "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering." [Exodus 3:7] From Calvary, God once again cries out, "I know well what you are suffering, not because I am watching this from some closed-circuit TV monitor in heaven, but because I have embraced all that suffering and human shame in the person of my beloved Son, Jesus Christ."

The ultimate word from Calvary is that you are not alone -- whatever abandonment, rejection, misunderstanding, brokenness you are feeling right now -- you are not alone. Whatever brings on shame in your life has been faced and embraced by the very Son of God, and because that state of shame has been embraced in love, you have nothing to

fear. Thus, the evangelist John writes in his first letter, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us." [1 John 4:18-19] On first reading this passage from John we might think that first we need to drive out all fear if we are to be perfected in the ways of love. However, the context clearly tells us that the first step is to realize that the perfect love, with which God first loves us in Christ, is that kind of love that can cast out all fear. In casting out fear, we have the courage to embrace that shadow side of the self and no longer feel shame. The sense of shame is one of the major obstacles to loving others, drawing closer to others, and allowing ourselves to respond with gratitude and joy to what we discover in ourselves and in others. Calvary dispels the fear that gives shame all its power over us in this life. That shame has been nailed to the cross in the gift of unconditional love and acceptance. It is the perfect love with which God has loved us in Jesus that casts out all fear. Free from that major obstacle in my life, I can take the first steps to love in a more perfect, non-manipulative way.

Thus, I begin to see how the Calvary event can begin to free me from fear which generates all the reactions to shame -- reactions which are so hurtful to me and to others. In this once-and-for-all-time event, I can be healed, set free and begin the journey of compassionate love in the name of Jesus, the crucified savior.

Of course, the good news in this healing process begun in Calvary is that it culminates in the resurrection. The healing process begins with the courage to see myself, broken and misunderstood and at times even rejected, not as an object of scorn and shame but as a beloved sister and brother of Jesus. As Jesus embraces all brokenness on the cross, I can have the courage to embrace my own brokenness with Him at my side, no longer seeing myself with the eyes of scornful self-hatred but with his eyes of unconditional acceptance. But, this is only the beginning of the healing process. For, as we read in the letter to Timothy, "if we have died with the Lord, we shall also reign with the Lord." The resurrection of Jesus is God's judgment upon all human brokenness. After the Father's silence on Calvary, he breaks that silence with a resounding *AMEN* to the life and work of his Son, Jesus. Since Jesus embraces all our brokenness on Calvary, that Father's *AMEN* is his judgment upon all humanity who have had to face shame in their life. The resurrection of Jesus is God the Father's eternal promise that brokenness will not have the last word in my life. Even my wounds will be transformed.

Did you ever wonder why the glorified body of the risen Christ still contained the nail prints and the mark of the soldier's lance? If all things are made new in the power of the resurrection, why does Christ still have those wounds of his passion? Obviously, the past is still present, but in a glorified way. If we think of healing as some kind of magic eraser whereby I will forget all those shame-producing events in my life, then we have an unrealistic expectation of what healing will produce in us. Healing comes when the past no longer *controls* the present, when past hurts and wounds (whether self-inflicted or other-inflicted) no longer determine how I will respond to the present moment. But past

wounds, once glorified, can offer me the opportunity to bring healing and compassionate love to others. Thus, when the risen Christ appears to his disciples on that first Easter evening, when they are locked in the upper room in fear, Jesus appears to them and, showing them his hands and his side, delivers the message of *peace*. In this post-resurrection scene, there is our mission: to allow others to see our wounds-as-glorified, offering peace and hope to all who still seem to suffer alone in their brokenness.

I would like to close with a poem that I once encountered on a retreat. Sadly, I remember neither the name of the book nor its author, but I offer these words in the belief that they sum up what I desire to say about the healing effect of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

I look into myself  
    anxious at what I might find.  
I do not discover beauty,  
    and yet I am beautiful.  
I do not find truth,  
    And yet I live the truth.  
I find much poverty,  
    And yet I make others rich.  
I do not find purity,  
    And yet my touch purifies.  
The Miracle is:  
    He is in me!  
        The Perfect One,  
            The Pure and Truthful One.  
And I am not afraid anymore  
    when I see my dark side,  
    when I become disappointed in myself,  
    when I don't achieve my goals.  
My perfection is found in Him,  
And His perfection becomes visible in Me.

