



The Gospel reading for the Sunday following the High Feast of Easter (John 20:19-31) is a reminder to us that God works through physical means and that the human body matters to Him. The Son took on our flesh to die on the cross to pay the price for our sins and bodily rose again to declare us right with the Father. Jesus' risen body retains the wounds inflicted upon it during His crucifixion and after His death, and it is by these wounds that we are healed in body and soul.

We commonly single out Thomas as the doubting one, as he did not trust the resurrection report from his fellow disciples. In truth though, none of the disciples truly believed that Christ had risen before seeing the physical evidence, either the empty tomb (Peter and John) and/or His wounds (all eleven) with their own eyes. Yet, in spite of their sin of unbelief, Jesus declared God's peace to the repentant disciples, namely that through His physical suffering, death, and resurrection, they had been forgiven and reconciled with Him. They mattered that much to Him! And because all humanity matters to Him, He established the Office of the Holy Ministry through them. The Author of Life Himself, who had breathed life into Adam, who breathed life into the dry bones in Ezekiel's sight, and who conquered death by rising again from the dead, breathed His life-giving Spirit on these men that through them and all of the men in the Office henceforth, all might hear His Word, receive the Holy Spirit, and be saved. Remember that God does not desire that sinners die, but that they repent and live. He provides the physical means for that to happen.

We each received the Holy Spirit in our baptism through water sprinkled on our skin combined with God's Word spoken in our ear. Yet, we, too, fall into unbelief and sin. Week in and week out though, God calls us to gather in person to repent and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Just as our Lord became incarnate through the word spoken by the angel Gabriel into Mary's ear, we are refreshed, namely brought back to life, through the Word of God spoken into our ears by the mouths of our pastors, in His name and by His command. Furthermore, although we have not directly seen our Lord's wounds as did the disciples, through the reading of the weekly Scripture texts and the proclamation of God's Law and Gospel into our ears, and the speaking of the Creed with our mouths, we believe and confess Christ crucified and risen for us. And, while Thomas may or may not have actually touched Jesus' wounds, we touch His very body and blood, wounds and all, with our lips and tongues. On the Last Day, we too shall bodily rise again and live in eternal bliss in His presence, gazing on His glorious scars!

Our Lord's wounds prove that we matter to Him. Indeed, all people matter to Him from the time of their conception onward. For all of this we thank God and pray that He will use our witness to bring others into His Church, that they too will not die but receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Joyous and blessed Eastertide to all!