

Second Sunday of Easter, Cycle C
Acts of the Apostles 5:12-16
Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24
Revelation 1:9-11A, 12-13, 17-19
John 20:19-31
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More than thirty-five years ago, as a newly minted seminarian, I was told to choose my first spiritual director. I chose Fr. Claude - a young Notre Dame professor who lived with us in the seminary. I was attracted by Fr. Claude's youthful energy and his love of new ideas. He was kind and friendly. In a word, he was joyful.

As the years went by, I grew less enchanted by Claude. I began to think he was *too* joyful. In light of what I was learning about the amount of suffering in the world, Claude seemed to lack gravitas. I wondered if he was a sufficiently serious person. (In retrospect, I can see that I was taking, not the world, but *myself* too seriously.)

Since my seminary days, Claude has had a successful academic career and his priesthood has been a gift for countless people. Along the way, he has suffered more than his share of the losses and disappointments that the years inevitably bring. Yet to all appearances he remains the same enthusiastic, upbeat person he has always been. Now that life has had time to kick me around a bit, I see my friend Claude in a new light. What I once, in my ignorance, saw as a lack of gravitas, is revealed as grace-inspired fortitude. He has transcended his suffering. His joy is holy. If I see Claude more clearly now than I used to, it is

because I know something of what he has had to endure. It is by his wounds that I know him.

In our Gospel, when Thomas is told that the risen Christ has appeared to the other disciples, he says, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” It is customary to criticize Thomas for his apparent lack of faith, but it is possible to interpret his words another way. After all, when Christ appeared to the other disciples, the first thing he did after greeting them was to show them his wounds. It is by his wounds that they recognize him. Thomas is simply asking to have the same experience. Maybe he’s just more tactile than the others.

In our own way, we too recognize Christ by his wounds. Our awe, grief and gratitude at the enormity of what he has endured for our sake, enable us to see him for who he is – so much so that I suspect we would find a Christ unmarked by suffering to be alien and alienating. It is by his wounds that we know him. And it is by our own wounds that we recognize him in one another.