

Resurrection- and Wounded Bodies



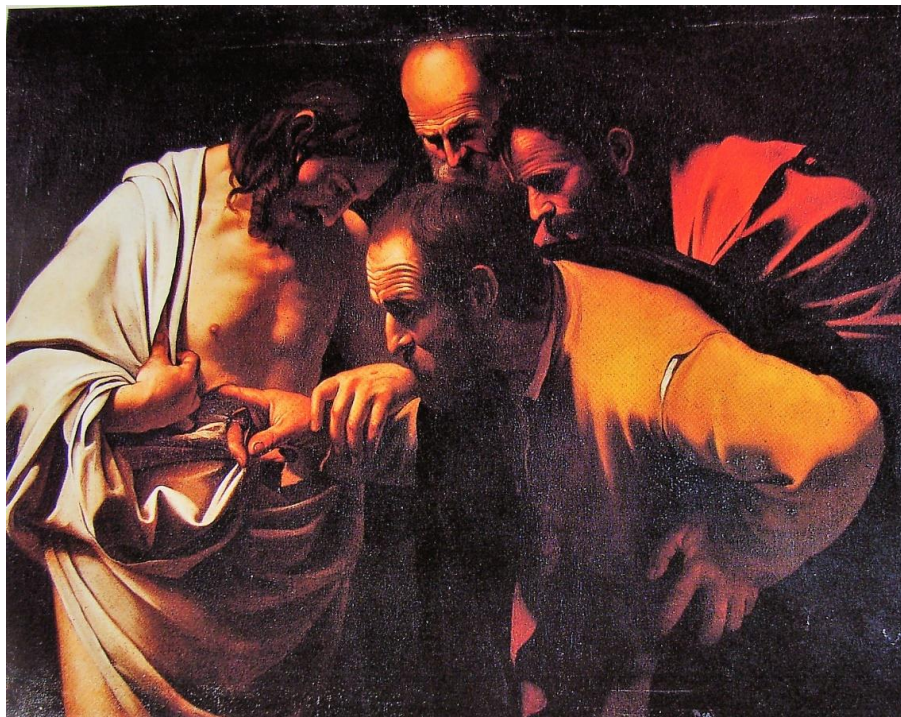
The Resurrection Icon above, was 'written' by Australian artist Earle Backen. It depicts the risen Jesus, having broken the gates of hell, assisting Adam and Eve to climb out of the coffins in which their dead bodies have been laying. It is the moment of their resurrection and new life! We might have expected them to be shown in the prime of life, or innocent and naked as when they were first created and given life by God. Instead we see Adam with grey hair and beard, Eve certainly not a young girl, and both fully clothed climbing out of their coffins with difficulty!

When we die and are raised by Christ, the whole of ourselves (bodies, minds and spirits) are healed, redeemed, transformed and given new life. All the pain and suffering we have endured, all the joy and love that has thrilled us, all our relationships with others, and all the wrinkles that we have gained along the way remain part of us. All that makes us who we are, is not taken away but

changed, made whole and raised to eternal life in God's love.

During our lives, we have all known failures as well as successes. These failures have often been important for our growth. When we tried to walk as small children, falls were a necessary part of the learning procedure. Failures, mistakes and the wounds we have caused others and those we have received are all experiences through which we can learn about God's love. This suffering and these wounds, physical, mental and emotional, can be transformed or resurrected in our lives on earth each day. The risen Jesus and the Spirit of God can work within and through our pain to make us more loving, understanding and caring of others.

In John's Gospel chapter 20, Jesus, on the evening of the first Easter Day in the Upper Room, used the nail holes in his hands and the spear's wound in his side to identify himself to his friends. We, and Jesus, might have expected these wounds to have disappeared in Jesus' new risen body, but they did not. They were and are important marks that identify Jesus and his sharing of our humanity.



A week later, again in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Jesus showed his wounds to Thomas, who had declared he would only believe Jesus had risen if he could

put his finger in the nail holes and hand in the wound in his side. We don't know whether Thomas actually did this, but Caravaggio in his painting, '*Doubting Thomas*', confronts us with Jesus guiding Thomas' hand and finger into the wound in his side.

Physically, emotionally and through words, to touch the raw wounds of another, can be almost unbearably painful for all concerned. It is reaching inside another, uncovering and sharing a deep inner pain, fear, shame or grief. When we allow the risen Jesus, in love, to touch, or even just to see our wounds, he will share our pain, and the healing and transforming of what is revealed will begin.

Each time the risen Jesus entered the Upper Room where the disciples were hiding behind locked doors, he greeted them with the words, "Peace be with you," John 20:19,26. The disciples were frightened and not at peace. They feared for their own lives and were ashamed of their desertion of their leader when he was captured in the garden.

Today, when pondering the world scene, we too can experience fear. Where will the next act of terrorism appear? Will the defiant words of leaders of some nations result in a nuclear war? And what about climate change? How will more intense cyclones and flooding affect the world? In Australia these events will touch us and wound us in particular ways.

In our personal lives, we also experience fears and shame. We can fear failure, loss, diminishing physical and mental health, death and change. Shameful acts in our past rise up in our minds to trouble us. All our fears, along with our pain, guilt and suffering, wound our bodies. Can we today dare to reveal our wounded bodies to the risen Jesus?

Each Easter, as individuals (*and* as a flawed Church), we are reminded that the risen Jesus is always ready to gently touch our wounds with his wounded hands, raising us up by offering us peace, healing, forgiveness and resurrection life. Can the wounds of our bodies then become loving healing wounds through which the risen Jesus touches, heals, transforms and gives new life to wounded others?

Sr Dr Helen CSC, April 2017