

"He showed then his hands and his side" [Jn 20:20]

Message of Hope

"My parents are divorced and my life was messed up!"
Comments such as this are common from young people today. Others might include "Our house burnt down" or "I am bullied at school" or "my father was never around" or "my boyfriend used me" and so on.

Each of us has experiences which have marked us with scars. Sometimes it may be many years before we seem to be 'over' the experience. The fact is each one of us knows that we are wounded! Sometimes it is physical, other times it is emotional, psychological, spiritual or intellectual.

The Scriptures tell us that there can be a meaning, a purpose, even a value, to our wounds.

In Holy Week, we reflect on the words about Jesus: "By his wounds, we are healed" (Is 53:5). The Son of God became a man to experience what each of us experiences, but also to take us into his experience. After the Resurrection, Jesus invited the disciples to touch his wounds, to put their fingers into the holes made by the nails, and in the case of Thomas, to put his hands into the side – to touch the very heart – of Christ. He showed them that in the Resurrection wounds will be healed, even glorified, but not pretended away as if they had never happened.

When Saint Paul is defending himself against criticisms that he is not a genuine apostle, not being one of the Twelve, he highlights his own family background and education, but ends by boasting of his wounds and his weaknesses. He cryptically states "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). In so doing, he clearly identifies his wounds – whether beaten, harassed, stoned or whipped, misunderstood or defamed – as his apostolic credentials (see 2 Cor 11-12:13).

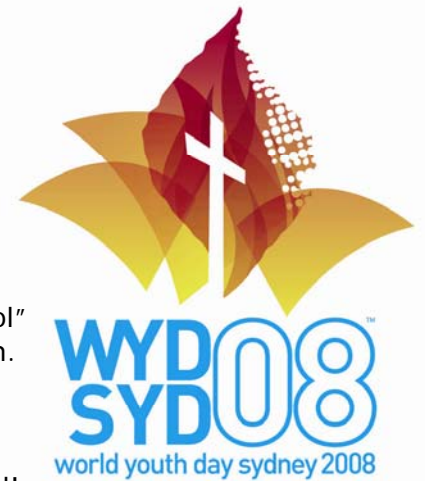
The lives of saints show that it is not that natural capacities – the good bits of our personality, intelligence etc - used by God in their lives, but even the damaged bits. As St Augustine said: "Grace builds on nature" and as St Thomas Aquinas noted: "Grace perfects nature". As in the case of Jesus, our model, God allows us to experience wounds, because they can become – if we allow God to work through our weakness – means of grace for ourselves and for others. In some mysterious way they can join with and complete the wounds of Christ himself.

I once knew a priest who was a famous confessor to whom people flocked for advice and to experience God's mercy. What was his secret? He was battling with substance abuse himself. He knew his penitent's weakness. His wound became his gift as he mediated the grace of Easter to others.

Let us never consider that our wounds and weaknesses are immovable obstacles to a life of holiness. Rather, let us see that our wounds, which once healed in heaven will shine like the sun can here in this life be Apostolic tools for God's grace to work powerfully.

From all of us at World Youth Day 2008, may God bless you and all those you love in this holiest of seasons.

+Anthony Fisher OP
Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008



Faith Foundations

The Healing Wounds of Jesus Christ

God... "shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."
(St Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:8)

For people outside the Christian faith, it may seem puzzling that the climax of each of the Gospels is the anguish, torture and execution of Jesus Christ. How can these horrifying accounts call themselves "**The Good News?**"

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah announces that God will rescue and bring healing to all humanity through a totally good and innocent **Suffering Servant** who "was pierced for our offences, crushed for our sins" (Isaiah 53:5), so that the power of evil will be cancelled and overcome.

Christians see this prophecy fulfilled in an even greater way than envisioned by the great prophet. We believe that God Himself became that **Servant** and that **Saviour**. In Jesus Christ and **His Passion**, God's limitless and overwhelming love for the whole world and for each and every one of us is perfectly **incarnated** in Jesus' heart and body.

The vivid traces of God's saving act are the **Five Wounds of Christ**: the **four nail wounds** in His hands and feet, and the deep slash caused by the lance thrust into **His side** (John 19:33-36).

After the Resurrection, Jesus Christ still bore the wounds of His Passion. The initially doubting St Thomas the Apostle has a life-changing encounter with the actual wounds of Jesus when he is asked by the Resurrected Lord "Give me your hand; put it into my side" (John 20:24-29).

St Peter describes how the wounds of Christ are both saving signs and a means for us to convert ourselves to the self-giving love of Jesus. "He was bearing our faults in his own body; so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24).

Praying while contemplating and "resting in" the loving wounds of Jesus, assists us to draw closer to Christ, and to realise more deeply the price of God's love, and our need for this love and mercy.

The "Five wounds" are common themes in the writings of the mystical saints, from Saints Ambrose, Catherine of Siena and Bernard. The **Stigmatic Saints** such as Padre Pio (q.v), Catherine de Ricci and Francis of Assisi share Christ's wounds mystically and physically in their own bodies.



"St. Francis of Assisi
Contemplating the Wounds of
Christ"
by Michael O'Brien

Pilgrim Prayer

The Anima Christi is a prayer from around the 14th century. It is still widely used after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

Anima Christi



Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from Christ's side, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That I may praise Thee with Thy saints
and with Thy angels
Forever and ever
Amen

Inspired writings

Pope Benedict XVI

General Audience, Wednesday, 27 September 2006

Saint Peter's Square

Thomas the twin



Then, the proverbial scene of the doubting Thomas that occurred eight days after Easter is very well known. At first he did not believe that Jesus had appeared in his absence and said: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20: 25).

Basically, from these words emerges the conviction that Jesus can now be recognised by his wounds rather than by his face. Thomas holds that the signs that confirm Jesus' identity are now above all his wounds, in which he reveals to us how much he loved us. In this the Apostle is not mistaken.

As we know, Jesus reappeared among his disciples eight days later and this time Thomas was present. Jesus summons him: "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing" (Jn 20: 27).

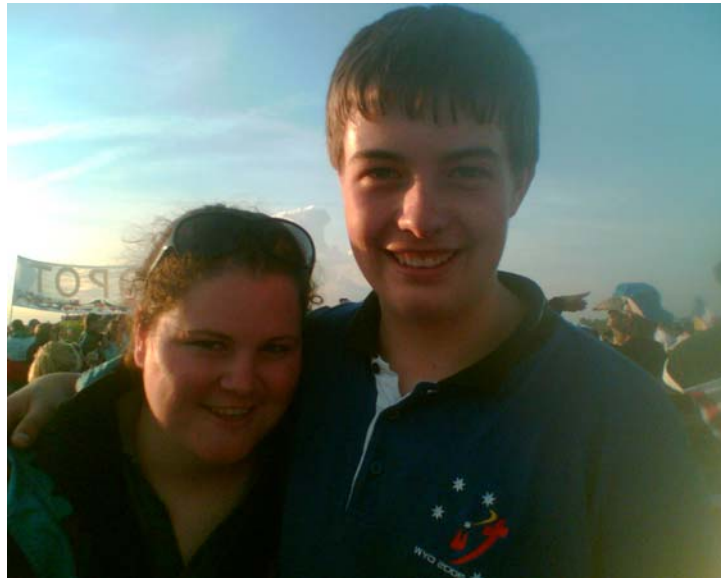
Thomas reacts with the most splendid profession of faith in the whole of the New Testament: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20: 28). St Augustine comments on this: Thomas "saw and touched the man, and acknowledged the God whom he neither saw nor touched; but by the means of what he saw and touched, he now put far away from him every doubt, and believed the other" (In ev. Jo. 121, 5).'

Click here for direct link

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060927_en.html

Testimony of Faith

Catherine, Diocese of Sandhurst



Catherine and Tennyson at the overnight sleep-out, WYD Cologne, 2005.

Cologne 2005 was my second World Youth Day and certainly my most enlightening. After Toronto in 2002, I had what you would probably call a lull in my faith. I went to church maybe once a month, got drunk every weekend, and certainly never even contemplated going to confession. Luckily, for me, God called me back and I decided to head to Cologne for a spiritual flush of my soul.

It was not to be an easy road to travel though. On the first day I arrived for my pre WYD pilgrimage in Rome, my Grandmother died. I had never felt so alone in my life. I had just met this group of 50 people and I was a blubbing mess for the first day. Then, as I was slowly getting over my nanny's passing, a friend of mine died in a car accident. I had just about had enough of the whole trip! It was at this time that I rediscovered the profound importance, guidance and clarity of the rosary. Fifty people praying decades cannot be ignored by Mary or God.

I am certain it was a good thing that for the whole time I was overseas, unable to grieve with the rest of my family and friends, I was seeing God alive in thousands of young people. I do not doubt for a second that if I had been in any other type of overseas trip, I would have been a wreck and used other methods to escape my sadness. Fortunately, for me, I was in a group of wonderful people who listened, cried, taught, learnt and most importantly, laughed with me.

I can only say that WYD will change you forever, in ways that you will never gain from drugs and debauchery. Give WYD a go, you will not regret it!

Saints and Witnesses

St Maria Goretti



Born: 16 October 1890 in Corinaldo, near the Apennine Mountains Italy.

Died: 6 July 1902.

Patron Saint of: young girls, victims of violent crime, those trying to be chaste.

Feast Day: 6 July.

Represented in Religious Art: as a peasant girl with long flowing hair carrying lilies.

Maria Teresa Goretti was born as the eldest of a poor farming family of six children in the icy mountain country near Ancona in Italy.

The family moved down to the warmer regions of Roman Campagna where Luigi, the father - after struggling to care for his little farm - caught malaria and died. The family became very vulnerable and had taken in another farm worker, Giovanni Serenelli and his 18-year old son Alessandro while Luigi was ill. When Luigi died, these men took control of the farm.

Maria was only 12, but had already become the housekeeper and child-minder. She could not read or write but was dedicated to learning about her faith, devoted to prayer and eagerly prepared to make her First Holy Communion.

The day of her First Communion, she found herself confronted by Alessandro in the house alone with her baby sister. Alessandro had been fixated on pornographic books and had been spying on Maria for some time.

Alessandro brutally dragged her behind a locked door and attempted to rape Maria, who fought him off and warned him that he was in danger of harming himself through sin more than her. He flew into a rage, strangled and beat Maria, and finally stabbed her over 11 times and fled.

Her mother Assunta and the other labourers found her alive but seriously wounded. Maria was taken to hospital, but the doctors could not repair the slashing and stabbings. Maria was able to receive **viaticum** - the Holy Communion of the dying. After 24 hours in the company of her mother and others in prayer, Maria died forgiving Alessandro for his assault.

Alessandro was arrested and condemned to 30 years in a solitary jail cell. He was aggressive and brutal, until Maria appeared to him in a dream handing him lilies of forgiveness - one for each stab wound. He immediately repented and after completing his jail term became a gardener in a Franciscan friary. He and Assunta both attended Maria's canonization ceremony in Rome in 1950.

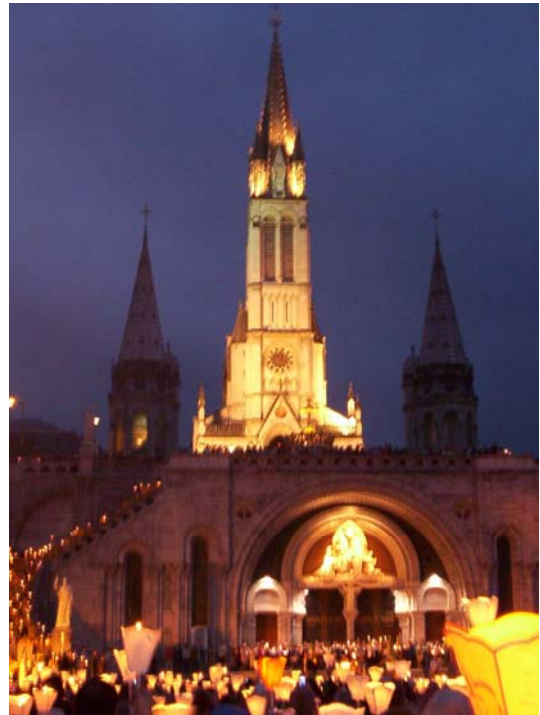
Place of Pilgrimage

Lourdes, France

150 years ago, Lourdes was an unknown, destitute town; now it is one of the most well-loved and visited Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world.

Perched in the rocky mountain areas of South West Basque-speaking France, the fame of Lourdes began when an extremely poor, illiterate and asthmatic girl of 14, **Bernadette Soubirous**, had an astonishing experience she could not quite believe.

On **February 11th, 1858**, St Bernadette and some companions were hunting for scraps of firewood near the River Gave. Bernadette saw a mysterious smiling lady surrounded by light in a rocky recess. The "beautiful little lady" asked Bernadette to visit the grotto each day for a fortnight.



Over this amazing period of time, a growing crowd of people, the mayor of the town and the police would follow Bernadette to her appointments. Some hoped to catch sight of "the lady" and others came to prove that Bernadette was insane or a fraud.

No one saw "the lady" but Bernadette. She said "the lady" wanted all the people to do penance for their sins and told Bernadette to dig to find a flowing spring of water in which to wash. The spring immediately appeared to have a mysterious healing power.

The parish priest doubted the story - and asked Bernadette to seek the name of the woman of **the apparition**. The woman said, in Bernadette's dialect, that she was "**The Immaculate Conception**" a name Bernadette did not understand.

However the priests and bishops were shocked, as this was the title officially given to **The Blessed Virgin Mary**, the **Mother of Jesus Christ**, by the Pope and the Church in 1854.

In 1889 a large church was built near the grotto in Lourdes, and millions of people travel to the site each year, bringing the sick and disabled to bathe in and drink the **Lourdes water**. There have been a number of outstanding medical cures associated with Lourdes, but many more people witness to the subtle miracles which occur to Lourdes pilgrims - conversion of heart, peace of mind and the gifts of spiritual healing.

St Bernadette only saw **Our Lady of Lourdes** for a short time, and then became an enclosed nun and was a joyful and inspiring presence in the convent despite her ill-health and hardships. Her body lies **incorrupt** in the convent in Nevers, where she lived her last years.

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes: February 11th (Also World Day of the Sick).

Towards WYD08

GROUP REGISTRATION – FANTASTIC RESPONSE!

To use an Aussie phrase, group registrations are going like a house on fire. There has been a wonderful response since registration opened on 2 March. Two groups had registered within the first hour, and the pace has not slackened. After four weeks, we now have over 57,000 Pilgrims in 780 groups who have already registered their intention to come to Sydney for WYD08. A number of group leaders have sought additional information through the email help service and this will expand as the numbers increase. The call centre will also expand its services closer to the WYD08 week.

Group Registration is your advice to us that your group would like to come to WYD08. You do not need to make a firm commitment until much later in 2007 but it does mean that you are taking another step on your Pilgrimage to Sydney. In addition, you help us to be more accurate in the numbers we are expecting and that means we are able to provide better services to you.

Plans are well advanced for the opening of detailed registrations in mid 2007. From this point group leaders will be able to add the names and details of the members of their group and advise us when travel plans have been confirmed. For international Pilgrims, information to allow the visa applications to be processed automatically will also commence later this year. The WYD08 team are delighted with the support from the Australian Government, not only in making visas free to registered Pilgrims but with how they have worked with us in making the application process as easy as possible.

So if you have not yet registered your group, now is a good time to join us!

YOUTH FESTIVAL APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Applications for the Youth Festival opened in early April. The Youth Festival provides wonderful opportunities for people of different nationalities, communities and charisms to participate in WYD08.

The Youth Festival will cover a wide range of activities including concerts, performing arts, visual art exhibitions, workshops, forums, debates, street performances, missions, community or national gatherings, films and speakers, and a range of other activities that you may wish to suggest to the WYD08 team.

Applications, which will capture the basic information that you may wish to propose to us can be made through the website with final decisions on participation, locations and all of the practical issues to be completed later this year. The WYD08 team is conscious that we all need to provide as much notice as possible, particularly for people involved in the Youth Festival.

See you in Sydney in 15 Months!