

Healing by the Wounds of Risen Christ.
Life in the Spirit Session # 1 – April 19, 2006
By Father Jose Uppani

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It cannot escape the notice of even a most casual observer that Jesus after his resurrection took a special interest in pouring out love on the disciples, on healing their wounds of guilt and frustration. A close observation of his words and deeds during this time will be most convincing. The very first thing he wanted of Mary Magdalene as he appeared to her was to ask his disciples to hasten to Galilee to meet Him (cfr. Mt. 28:9). According to both Mathew's and Johns' gospel, the word he used to address them in his conversation with Mary Magdalene was "my brethren" (cfr. Mt. 28:9; Jn.20: 17)—a salutation they couldn't even dream of at that time when they were caught in frustration resulting from their disloyalty and desertion at the most crucial moments of his life. Even when they were indifferent and unresponsive to the report of Mary Magdalene that Jesus has risen and that he had asked them to go to Galilee to meet him, he sort them out where they were. And he entered the locked room as if he was impatient to wait until the door was opened! Note the way he greeted them: "*Peace be with you.*" *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord*" (Jn. 20:19-20). What an affectionate greeting it was! His behavior and conduct were strongest expressions of his fervent love and affection for them.

By saying "Peace be with you" Jesus was telling them that his love for them was not lessened even a bit on account of their unfaithfulness during his Passion and that he was willing to accept them with the same love he had before. He was in fact healing their oppressive wound of guilt by repeating those two words of profound love and reconciliation. Showing them his hands and side was not only a proof of his resurrection, but more than that it was an intimate sharing of his love and friendship with them. He was giving them an opportunity to enter deep within His tremendous love for them, which he expressed most evidently by suffering crucifixion for them. If cicatrice on the palm of a dad due to the constant hard labor to feed his family is considered a strong mark of his love for his beloved spouse and children, how much more should the wounds of Jesus on his palms and side, eloquent marks of his most humiliating death for their salvation be treated and valued as clear proof of his infinite love for his beloved disciples! In fact, by showing them his wounds after the Resurrection he was reaffirming his intense love for them in spite of their non-cooperation in his trials and suffering. In other words he was showing them his wounds as a monument of his unconditional and everlasting love for them. "*He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end...So, during supper, ...he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist*"(Jn. 13: 1—5). If washing their feet was the typical sign of His love for them, the glorified wounds on his hands and side which denote His suffering for them are certainly a more powerful memorial of His everlasting love for them!

Again, his eager pursuit of the two disciples who were fleeing from Jerusalem to Emmaus was another touching expression of his forgiving love. The Lord's compassionate love for the unfaithful disciples is very much highlighted in this episode. Knowing their distress and frustration, the Lord accompanies them a long way consoling them all the time. In order to give them a permanent liberation from their frustration and a total healing of the inner wounds inflicted in them by the terrible events of his passion and death, Jesus asks them a series of questions to dig out all the pain they had suppressed in their minds. And very cordially he

welcomed their sentiments as a loving Mom patiently listens attentively to narration of her little child's small, small frustrations! Even though he upbraided them a little bit for their disbelief and hardness of heart he try to convince them of the need of his crucifixion at length. This he did by taking each and every prophecy about him in the Old Testament, showing them how they were fulfilled in His Passion and Death. Why did he venture on such a tiresome job just for the two disciples who had deserted him and even the community of his disciples? Jesus was using the occasion to emphasize that the vital part of his mission was to feel compassion for all those who were in distress, no matter how much they deserved their faith, because, their inner wounds were responsible for their negative reaction. The next important thing Jesus wants to let us know is that he is in right earnest to see that all our inner wounds that cause our failures are healed once and for all. It was the disciples' misunderstanding of the Messiah and his mission that led them to disown him at His Passion and Crucifixion. He knew well that making them fully conscious of the need of crucifixion alone would give them a permanent healing of their afflictions. Hence he took a pretty long time to explain to them very patiently which ultimately resulted in their fully getting healed of despair, sadness, fear, lack of faith, etc.

The episode of Jesus' going to the shore of Tiberias before dawn in search of six of the Apostles who had gone back to their old job of fishing is very, very appealing. The Lord had already told them at the very outset when he called them from the sea-shore that they were not supposed to go fishing any more, because they were to be fishers of men (cfr. 5:10-11). Hence, going fishing even after the appearance of the Risen Lord was something that could be ignored. Here, again, the Lord shows tremendous patience and compassion. He didn't even utter a word of reproach! Instead he began to pour out love on them. Preparing breakfast for them so early in the morning, lovingly taking it to the sea shore by himself, warming it again on the shore to make it fresh, serving the food by himself with the tenderness of a Mom—all these were good enough to expel all guilt and fear from their hearts and powerful enough to heal them of their wanton unfaithfulness. Rewarding them with a fabulous catch of fish instead of reproaching them for going fishing again—what a tremendous act of healing love!

Significance of Sacred wounds in healing our being

His showing the wounds to his disciples has a still deeper meaning. The Scripture clarifies it. St. Peter summaries the whole of Christ's Redemption in these words: "*He (Jesus) himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed*" (I Pet.2:24). The meaning of these words is obvious-significance of Jesus' wounds lies in the fact that it is the most potent medicine to heal the wounds of humanity caused by sin. It is very evident that from the above words of St. Peter that a state of wounded nature in man before his redemption is presupposed.. This is exactly what we mean by the "Original Sin". And the healing of this wounded human nature is actually the redemption Jesus won for us. Therefore, to know about our wounded nature and the means for it's healing is very important to personalize Christ's Redemption that he has earned for us through His death and Resurrection.

The "wounded nature" in man?

Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it thus: " By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself, but for all human beings (CCC 416). "Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this

deprivation is called 'original sin'" (ccc417). CCC418 says: "As a result of original sin, human nature was weakened in its powers; fell victim to ignorance, suffering, and worst of all- the curse of death; and inclined to sin (This inclination is called 'concupiscence')".

The 3rd chapter of the book of Genesis gives us an exact account of the "wound" created in man by sin. It is a four-fold alienation. God called it "death": "*You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat you are surely be doomed to die*" (Gen. 2: 16-17). It is obvious that Adam did not die on the day he ate the forbidden fruit in the sense of a physical death. But he actually died. The Scripture gives a detailed account of the nature of that death:

(1) Alienation from God-the source of life and every happiness.

"Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives" (ccc. 399). "*So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loin cloths for themselves. When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord among the trees of the garden*"(Gen. 3:6-8). This means Adam lost the holiness required to be in the presence of God, which he possessed before he broke God's command. He got alienated from God by sin. This is the fundamental "wound" transmitted to every human being as the result of the original sin. Each one of us is in this alienation. Thus Scripture says: "God looks down from heaven upon the human race, to see if even one is wise, if even one seeks God. All have gone astray" (Psalms.53:3).

It is this alienation from God, deep rooted in us that make our relationship with God very difficult, especially the establishment of an intimate and deep friendship with Him. Naturally, we are inclined to love the created world more than the Creator; we are often tempted to love ourselves more than God; we are tempted to ignore the Commandments, the Gospel values and the Teachings of the Church and choose to follow the style and ways of the world; we are drawn to seek our own comfort and convenience in everything we do instead of seeking what God desires from us. That is why even in our spiritual journey we choose what we feel comfortable with rather than accepting everything God offers us, surrendering totally to God's will as Virgin Mary did in her "*fiat*".

(2) Alienation from the neighbor.

Catechism says: "The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination" (400).

"Then He asked, 'Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!' The man replied, 'The woman whom you put here with me-she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it'" (Gen. 3:11-12). This shows that Adam got alienated from others-Even from his own flesh and bone". This wound of Adam and Eve is transmitted into every human being and it is expressed by division, hatred, disunity, anger, judging attitude, inability to love one's neighbor as one loves oneself.

It is because of this wound deep within us that we are not able to love others, as they deserve. Thus the spouses who are made one in "flesh" by the virtue of the sacrament of matrimony seek divorce or separation!! Those who marry after a long-term courtship and break up, undermining the oath they took before God, Church and the community. Thus the very mothers and fathers who vowed to live for their children, separate themselves at the risk of causing irreparable damage to the mental, spiritual and social dignity and growth of their children! Thus, brother hates brother, children despise parents, nations fight each other and so on and so forth.

(3) Alienation from the Creation.

Catechism says: "Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay" (400). "To the man he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, " Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as eat of the plants of the field: (Gen. 3:17-18). " You shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on earth" (Gen. 4: 11-12). It means that man was also alienated from the created world over which he had authority. As a result of sin man became the slave of the material world! This wound also is there innate in every human being. And man is ruled by a slavish attachment to the things of the world!

Nature retaliates in various ways. The poor yield from the soil in spite of the hard work put in and many new cropped up hurdles in tapping the resources of the beautiful world God created for us! Frequent occurrences of natural calamities! The Bible says : "God changed rivers into desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, Fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its people" (Ps. 107:33-34).

(4) Alienation from oneself.

Catechism says: "The control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered" (ccc 400). False love for oneself reached to the point of seeking self-gratification, even through base means, thereby wounding oneself more and more! Besides, man lost his genuine love and respect for himself. Instead, false love for oneself, self-hate, sense of guilt etc developed.

"Cain said to the Lord: 'My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, any one may kill me at sight.'" (Gen. 4: 14-15). This shows that in consequence of his sin man hates himself! This wound also is transmitted to every human being in the form of self-contempt, self-hatred, difficulty in forgiving oneself even after God has granted forgiveness, lack of self-confidence etc.

These four types of alienations - alienation from God, alienation from fellow beings, alienation from the created world, and alienation from oneself-distress every human heart.

Sin inflicts a very deep wound in the human heart. "Every offence is a two-edged sword; when it cuts, there can be no healing" (Sirach.21:3).

The immediate result of Adam's sin was that it inflicted an incurable wound in every human heart. We can see this in God's assessment of the condition of man after his fall: "*Yahweh saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that human hearts contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long*" (Gen. 6: 5). The prophet Jeremiah lamented: "*The heart is the most*

deceitful thing there is, and desperately wicked. No one can really know how bad it is. Only the Lord knows! He searches all hearts and examines deepest motives ... (Jer. 17:9-10). In fact the relevance of the 9th and 10th Commandments is in the context of this wounded nature within man. Both these Commandment are given to safeguard the heart against sin. And Jesus emphasized that the actual sinfulness is that of the heart than that of the actions: "*From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile*" (Mk. 7:21-23). And Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees was based on the same: "*Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evil doing*" (Mt. 23:28).

St. Paul's explanation

St. Paul explains this situation thus: "*I am sold into slavery with Sin as my owner. I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to-what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can't help myself, because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things. I know I am rotten through and through as far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is : sin still has me in its evil grasp. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin* (Rom. 7:14-23).

This scripture highlights the following truths: (1) Every one have still within him a lower nature which forces him to sin. (2) All are helpless and fail to overcome it. (3) It is this wounded nature that prevents a person from doing the good he really wants to do.

There is a solution! - Jesus Christ!!!

St. Paul continues his lamentation: "*Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free*" (Rom. 7: 25). Here St. Paul, on the basis of the revelation he has received from God, ascertains that by his death and resurrection Christ has set me free, he has healed my wounded nature.

It is Jesus' wounds that heal our wounds

St. Peter specifies how we receive this fundamental healing of our wounded nature: "By his wounds you have been healed" (I Pet. 2:24). It is noteworthy that when Jesus appeared after finishing his redemptive works-his suffering, death and resurrection-he always appeared with the marks of his crucifixion, the glorified wounds in his body. The sacred heart that was pierced while he was on the cross, turned out to be the eternal fountain of healing for the whole humanity. The Gospels says that Jesus healed the disciples of their wounds-wounds of guilt.

It was precisely this that Jesus had been performing when he asked the Apostles to see his hands and side right after the Resurrection. It was this that Jesus did in asking Thomas to touch his hands and put his hands in His side.

Isaiah's prophecy about healing by Christ's Wounds.

Healing by the wounds of Jesus was not something that happened accidentally. It was foretold. God's plan of Redemption was foretold by prophet Isaiah about 700 years before Jesus in terms of "healing by the wounds of the Redeemer": " *But he was pierced for our offences, crushed for our sins, Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed*". (Isaiah. 53:5).

Necessity of healing our inner wounds by the wounds of Christ.

Restoration to the original holiness and justice is the actual fruit of Jesus' death and resurrection. Forgiveness of sin committed or a life devoid of sin alone is not enough. Along with that the freedom to practice virtuous act is also necessary.: The Bible says: "*Jesus gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good*" (Titus. 2:14)

The freedom Jesus gives us is the complete freedom from sin. As long as the inner wounds created by sin are there, we are susceptible to sin and can yield to sinful inclinations. Hence a total healing of our inner self is necessary if we wish to enjoy the total freedom from sin, which Jesus offers us. Jesus' ever fresh sacred wounds are there in his resurrected body to heal us today and ever. The blood in the Resurrected body of Christ is there to sanctify our inner self-our conscience, mind, and senses. The power of Resurrection is this healing power. As the Apostles were healed of their wounds, by their contact with the sacred wounds in the Risen Lord's body, we too need to pray for the healing of our inner self by the same wounds.

Hints for daily reflections from April 19th to 25th

- It is an undeniable fact that I have an unquenchable thirst for love, no matter how old I grow, no matter how knowledgeable I am, and no matter how rich I am in everything. This is partly due to the deprivation of love from my parents/siblings/ friends/ spouse/ children/pastors/teachers etc. But mostly, it is because I am destined, by nature, to enjoy the most perfect love—the love of God.
- Even though I have received lots of love from my father, mother, siblings, friends, spouse, children etc over a period of many years, the fact remains that I still feel the need to be loved even more. This indicates that human love, no matter how deep and constant it is, can never quench my heart's yearning for love.
- I have spent so much time, energy and resources to win the love of others, to make me happy and joyful, and I have really enjoyed their love. But, at times, I still experience dissatisfaction, sadness and frustration because of the lack of love in my life. This proves that I need a far greater love than any human love!
- The only remedy for these is God's love! Because God is the fullness of love (God is Love!), enjoying God's love is the only effective means for contentment.
- God poured out his love on mankind not in a limited amount, but abundantly, so abundantly as to reinstate the former love relationship, which was entirely destroyed by Adam's free choice to sin.
- It was to provide us with this sufficiency that God sent his Only Son to the world:

“In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into to the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins” (I Jn. 4:9-10).

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (Ij. 3:16-17).

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love” (Jn. 15:9-10).

“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”(Jn. 10:10-11).

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28).

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (Jn. 14:1).

- Jesus gave this love to me by dying in my place, taking upon himself all the punishments I deserve due to my sins.
- The ever fresh wounds of the Risen Lord thus stands as a memorial and source of His everlasting love.
- But the pinnacle of God's expression of His love is the Holy Spirit: *“ The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5).*

- The very death of Jesus was, concretely speaking, to give me the Holy Spirit, to release the power of Holy Spirit, the fullness of God's love for me! The following Scriptures indicates this very well:

--“ *But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you*” (Jn. 16:7-8). Here, “to go” obviously means Jesus' death on the cross.

--“*On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'" He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified*” (Jn. 7:37-39). Since the hour of Jesus' glorification was the hour of his death, this Scripture indicates that Jesus' death was to fill every heart with the ‘Rivers of Living Water’, which is the Holy Spirit.

--“ *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always*” (Jn. 14:16). The fact that the only need for which Jesus promised to pray to His Father for the disciples would be for the Holy Spirit, further indicates that the most effective means to my salvation is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

--“ *And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him*” (Jn. 14:9-13). Jesus giving the absolute guarantee of answering our prayer for the Holy Spirit, again proves how vital the reception and in-filling of the Holy Spirit is for my salvation.

- The reason for Jesus to insist on being filled with Holy Spirit is that it is only by that that I am filled with the fullness of God's love, to the point of being healed completely of all my inner wounds. I then become like Jesus who revealed his identity as one who has Holy Spirit upon Him (cfr. Lk. 4:16-18).
- The experience of the Apostles exemplifies this very well. Though they knew much about the teaching of Christ, and they did love Him more than their own life, they could not put into practice what they thought they would! They did not have the courage to even stand by the cross as he was dying or help with his burial.
- But with the coming of the Holy Spirit everything was totally changed. They gave public testimony to his death and resurrection even from the Jerusalem Temple. They considered it a fortune to suffer persecution for Jesus' sake and all of them embraced martyrdom with great love for Christ!
- My experience of failures, sins, and temptations necessitates all the more my need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the very Power of God.
- This is the secret of the envious growth of Christianity in the first century and amazing holiness of thousands of saints in the Church. Above all, the secret of Virgin Mary's holiness—‘she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit’ to become the mother of God!
- Therefore, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not one of the spiritual exercises, but the most fundamental of all.

- Therefore, I must thirst for being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- For that I must know more about the Holy Spirit and His works within the human heart.
- Hence, I must give priority to attend all the Sessions on the Life in the Holy Spirit, no matter how big are the obstacles.
- Therefore, if some unforeseen obstacles come, instead of skipping these sessions I will pray hard to the Almighty to interfere and do everything in my power not to miss it.

Perseverance is indispensable to achieve the goal. We have to resist the temptation to drop this program in the middle. It is absolutely sure that it is not God's will to drop it in between; on the contrary it will be obeying the Evil one who is against every fruitful work of salvation. The Scripture warns: "*We have become partners of Christ if only we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end*" (Hebr. 3:14). Therefore, I need to pray every day for the grace of perseverance, to attend all the sessions, and also most fruitfully.

- The pains needed to attend all the Sessions is much but the reward will be incomparable. The Bible reminds us about it: "At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees" (Hebr. 12:11).
- Besides attending the Sessions regularly, prayerful reading of the Teachings given during each Session, praying for the infilling with the Holy Spirit, especially praying a rosary for it daily, observing some kind of mortification and sacrifice etc are necessary.
- Since Holy Mass is the source of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, celebrating the Mass daily or more frequently with this intention will be supremely helpful.
- Reading of the Scriptures, especially Acts of the Apostles and I Corinthians Chapters 11 and 14 are also recommended.