



Good Friday Message and Meditation

Dear friends in the RHF family,

Greetings to each of you who are part of the RHF family. I wish you hope and peace on this Good Friday, one of the holiest days of the calendar for Christians. We have a diverse group of staff and residents who represent many different religious traditions or who may have no religious affiliation. We welcome and value all, but it is also good to recall that RHF was founded as a church-related and faith-based mission.

Because of our particular roots, we pause to reflect on this day and to recall a man, Jesus, and to honor his love and sacrifice and finally the triumph of love on Easter Sunday. For those in the Christian tradition, this day may mean pausing for meditation or prayer or participating in a service of worship. For other persons it may seem strange that Christians call this day of pain and death by the term "Good". Here's a little meditation for Good Friday that may offer some understanding and perspective.

There is a great deal of Christian art that portrays Jesus the Christ after the resurrection. In many of these portrayals, Christ is shown with the wounds that were part of his execution. The triumphant and risen Christ has visible scars, something odd or even scandalous. Our human tendency, if we have scars, is to cover them up. If physical scars, we deal with them cosmetically. If emotional scars, we have all kinds of compensating behaviors to hide them. Not so with Jesus.

Why? Because the scars are his real power. They are signs of the depth of God's love. God's love for all humanity and for the whole creation, is such that God is willing to be entirely vulnerable to the human condition. God is not willing to avoid pain and suffering. If God is to also be a God of compassion and transformation, then God cannot avoid what we know and experience. And not in some purely theological or philosophical sense, but in a real sense of actually experiencing life as we do.

Writing to the early Christian community, the Apostle Paul writes, "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...and ...humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death....Therefore God has highly exalted him." (Philippians 2)

"Therefore" he was exalted! That one little word shows the power of the wounds. The scars, the vulnerability, these are his power. They are our hope. What a message for a pandemic year of unrelenting wounding. Because of our wounds we can be stronger. We have been hurt and threatened, "therefore" we have a way through to being transformed, if we trust that love is stronger than death. If we don't try to cover over the scars.

In the ending to Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, are these wonderful words: "The world breaks everyone, then some become strong at the broken places." The passionate and loving vulnerability of God, honored humbly and quietly on this Good Friday, is exactly the love that bursts forth from the tomb on Easter day. And that is indeed "good" and holy.

Your RHF Board of Directors sends to each of you the greatest of hope and joy as you experience these days. You are always in our thoughts. We thank all who work in our mission of housing and services and all who live in our communities and all who support our mission. We wish many blessings to you all.

Rev. Dr. David Moyer, Chair
National Board of Directors
Retirement Housing Foundation