



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Sunday, 24 April 2022 – Easter 2**  
**Readings: Acts 5: 27-32 and St John 20:29-end**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

**Scars: to hide or not to hide? That is the question**

In today's Gospel, it's Jesus' scars that caught my attention. Possibly most of us have physical scars, perhaps those caused by accidents or, from routine medical procedures and, maybe, we try to hide or disguise them. By contrast in the Gospel, Jesus does not hide his scars but draws the Apostles' attention to them. Why was that so important? Let's view scars through the eyes of different groups of people: Jesus' disciples, the High Priest and his cohort; resilient disciples and, ourselves.

**Spurred into action**

Why Thomas wasn't there when Jesus first appeared to his disciples and showed them his scars, we just don't know. What we do know, is that Thomas, despite appearances to the contrary, was switched on. When Jesus made his final journey into Jerusalem, the other disciples were too blinkered by their own beliefs to discern the truth. Only Thomas grasped that Jesus was going to die, when he said "Let us go, that we may die with him." Yet it's Thomas who earns his doubting nickname. In showing the disciples and then Thomas, the scars on his hands and side, Jesus was not rubbing his nose in his doubts but rather underpinning his faith. "Thomas, look! You were right, I did have to suffer and die. Now, though, you can see by these scars the evidence for yourself, death could not hold me, I'm alive, I have conquered, as I said I would." The impact of those scars on the disciples, galvanised them into action. No more were they scared witless running away or, denying Christ or, hiding behind locked doors. The Acts of the Apostles, documents Peter's courage and the others in going boldly out into the streets and even the temple, to testify to all: Jesus is risen! Sin and death have been overcome.

**Stymied by prejudice**

By contrast, the High Priest viewed things differently. After the crucifixion on that fateful Friday, when the Sabbath began, resting in his house he doubtless felt secure in the knowledge that that trouble-maker Jesus was dead. The scars to the High Priest's wounded pride could heal or, at least be hidden. He and his cohort would once more reign supreme in religious piety and all the people would, once more, pay undivided attention to them! But, after the Sabbath, gut-wrenching news reached him; Jesus' disciples claimed he was alive, he had risen from the dead! The High Priest and his men give them strict instructions not to teach in Jesus' name trying to stifle the news but, it has no effect so, they arrest them. Drawing on his personal experience, Peter faced the High Priest and the religious elite and

preached the Gospel good news summarising, “Yes, you had Jesus killed but God raised him to new life.” Next, as Jesus had instructed, Peter offered that divine, eternal olive branch stating, “Forgiveness is found in Jesus”. And, in case they needed further encouragement Peter said “And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” The High Priest’s mind must have turned cartwheels speculating whether these disciples were right; to admit that he had been wrong and, to seek God’s forgiveness. Sadly, he could not overcome his prejudice. Instead, later, he had them flogged. Scarred physically though these disciples may have been, resiliently they kept going.

### **Resilience is key**

In a world obsessed with bodily image, resilient disciples neither hide nor flaunt their scars, rather they offer them to Christ for his risen life to shed light on their dark scars and by his mercy heal them. Such does not mean that resilient disciples are unaffected by hardship, trauma, ridicule or, their own wilful spiritual failings. Instead, they acknowledge that they are fragile creatures, who have been moulded by their experiences, yet, they seek to be transformed and loved into service by Christ’s saving grace with the Holy Spirit’s support to lead them on. No matter how slowly or falteringly they travel, they move forward in faith reassured that God is with them each step of the way.

### **Are we resilient or not resilient? That is the question?**

We all have scars beyond the physical. There’s the internal emotional or, spiritual scars that can take the longest to heal. Maybe, in wounded pride we keep poking at or, do we try to ignore them hoping that they will go away? Wounds always fester unless attended to. Because of Easter, Christians can leave their wounds at the foot of the cross. To receive the peace of God, to ask his forgiveness, as is our need and to offer it to others, is an Easter blessing. So, the question to ask ourselves is: How resilient a disciple, am I? Amen.