

2nd Sunday of Easter – April 27/28, 2019 – Reflection

“(Thomas) said to (the other disciples who told him they had seen the Lord), ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’”

(The Gospel of John)

Kingdoms and nations all over the world, in all the ages of human history, have thumped their chests, paraded their might, saluted their flags, and followed their warriors into wars and battles to prove their strength, their ascendancy, the superiority of their political doctrine and cultural way of life against all comers.

Those who fight those battles and survive often come home wounded, changed, chastened and when people ask them what it was like, they say, “War is hell!” Their families nod as if they understand. The politicians pin medals on their chests, thank them for their service, and then go right on rattling their sabers and committing young lives to all the hot spots of the world in the name of service to God and country.

John Kennedy swam his crew to safety after their PT boat was rammed in the night by a Japanese destroyer. His injured back never allowed him to lift his little children into Daddy’s arms.

Bob Dole was so injured by German machine gun fire in Italy in World War II that the medics wrote a large “M” in his own blood on his

forehead to alert others that he had received the largest dose of morphine they could give and that his survival was hopeless. For the rest of his very public life, Dole carried a pen gripped in his shriveled right hand so that people would understand why he couldn't shake their hand.

John McCain was a crack Navy pilot who was shot down over Vietnam and held and tortured in a North Vietnamese prison for more than five years. The torture he endured left him with an awkward posture that showed itself in his inability to raise his arms above his chest, even to claim his many electoral victories.

"War is hell!"

Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man came to do battle with the forces of evil, to conquer sin and death, on behalf of all of us who had fallen victim to that powerful enemy. Not only is war hell, but the war He waged out of love for us was literally with hell! He rose from the dead and seeming defeat, triumphant, but He kept the wounds to show us the true cost of sin; to show us what kind of sacrifice real love demands; to show us that to follow Him, to claim His name as Christian is no walk in the park. It is the walk that carries the cross. It is the walk that bears insult and injury patiently. It is the walk that calls down mercy on the ones who seek my life. It is the walk undertaken only by those who, understanding that war is hell, still put one foot in front of the other even if it means laying down my life for another.

A true hero is always a wounded hero, the one who walks the walk, sometimes with a limp.

Our Risen Lord kept the wounds of the cross and shows them to the world so that all of us "doubting Thomases" might truly understand the cost of war, the cost of mercy, the cost of love.

He calls us to come, follow Him. Do we dare?!