



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

on the Branford Green

May you find Christ, Community and Compassion within these historic walls.

The Wounds of a New Creation

By The Rev Sharon Gracen

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My favorite episode of the original Star Trek series (fully aware of how that dates me!) was called The Empath. The intrepid crew of the Starship Enterprise go to a planet in a dying solar system to locate a research team with whom they have lost contact. Of course, all sorts of strange things happen to them and they encounter a young woman, who is mute and unable to communicate with them, Dr. McCoy gives her the name Gem. And they discover that she has an extraordinary ability. Captain Kirk has been injured and Gem touches him and the bloody wound disappears from his forehead and reappears on hers, where it is healed.

The beings who are pulling the strings in the episode are testing Gem, by torturing and injuring Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy repeatedly to see if she is willing to sacrifice herself to save them. There are familiar themes running through the story. She bears their wounds and saves her people.

Thomas, the doubting disciple, would only be convinced that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead if he saw the evidence of his torture, the marks put upon him by cruelty. Those wounds are indeed the evidence of torture but they are also the evidence of love. In American Sign Language, the sign for Jesus is made by touching the palm of each hand. By his wounds we are healed and by our wounds he is known.

These wounds are rich with meaning. In the story of the Garden in the Book of Genesis, the generic human, the *adam*, is wounded in the side and divided so that the one becomes two and in relationship, humanity is complete. In the wounding of Jesus' side, we might see a parallel, in humankind made new by the incarnation and the sacrifice, a worthy companion for the divine being is created. A new relationship between divinity and humanity is forged and the completion of all life is now possible. Wounds become powerful places of new life.

Frederick Bauerschmidt is a professor of Theology at Loyola U. in Maryland. He is the author of many books and scholarly articles. I know because I have been carrying one of them from the *Journal of Literature & Theology* around for more than a dozen years, it is called *The Wounds of Christ*. He begins with "The wound is a negative space, defined by emptiness rather than fullness." It is the opposite or the "other" to all that had been. He talks about the process of creation as beginning with a wound within the being of God. In the mystery of God, in that state in which there was nothing else but God, until the Word was spoken. In the speaking of that Word, the logos, Bauerschmidt says that God contracted or

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withdrew to make room for creation. God tore the divine presence and into the empty wound, God spoke the light and all that followed. The wound that becomes creation is the continual self-limitation of God, God continues to allow something other to exist; it is self-inflicted divine humility. Creation needs the empty space of a wound in order to be. This tear in the Divine self is replayed on the day of the crucifixion when the curtain of the Temple is torn in two. Jesus had worked to open the way to God by reframing the laws and how they were enforced, by telling his disciples to pray "Our Father", he challenged the exclusivity of the Temple and said that everyone has access God, if they only knew it, if those in authority would stop getting in their way. The death on the cross opened a wound in the religious understanding.

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