

Look in the Mirror
And See Christ's Scarred Body
John 20: 19-29
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How do you say, "I love you," without using words?
Without using any words, how do you express love to another person?
How do you say, "I love you," through your body language? Through the various languages your body speaks?
Your face—how do you say, "I love you," with your face? With your expression? With your eyes?

How does the rest of your body express love? Your posture? Your gestures? Your openness? Touch? All the other ways your body can do something with someone or for someone to express love? Maybe a kiss? Maybe making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?

And now, go ahead and use words. How do you say, "I love you," with words? But without the words, "I love you." Which other words and phrases say, "I love you," to another person? There are countless words and phrases you can use, depending on the situation. Everything from, "you are precious to me," to, "let me buy you a beer."

As humans, we're blessed with countless ways to express love. With and without words. With our bodies.

Try this now.

How do you say, "God loves you," without using words?
Without using any words, how do you communicate God's love to another person?
How do you say, "God loves you," through your body language? Your expression? Your gestures? Touch? What your body does with or for another person?

And now go ahead and use words, but not the words, "God loves you." Which other words communicate God's love to another person?

As humans, we have countless ways to express God's love. With and without words. With our bodies. Our expressions and gestures. Touch. What we do and how we do it.

But does how we communicate God's love to someone really differ from how we communicate our love to someone?

It seems to me that we communicate God's love in the same ways we communicate our love. God's love is the source of our love. Our love in reality is God's love. In both cases, we're simply expressing love.

Now try this.

How do you proclaim, "Christ lives," without using words?
Without using any words, how do you communicate, "Christ lives," to another person, to the world?

How do you say, "Christ lives," through your body language? Your face? Your gestures? Your touch? Your presence? Your actions?

And now using words, how do you say, "Christ lives," without actually using those words? Which other words communicate, "Christ lives," to another person?

Does proclaiming "Christ lives" really differ all that much from the ways you express love to other people? Your love? God's love? *Love?*

I don't think so. To proclaim, "Christ lives," is to proclaim that God's love is still incarnate within human life. Christ's love is still here in human form. In your human form.

As humans, we have countless ways to proclaim, "Christ lives."

Proclaiming "Christ lives" is what we do as disciples of the living Christ. We practice proclaiming, "Christ lives," in as many ways we possibly can. We look for every opportunity, with every person we encounter, in every situation we find ourselves in, to proclaim, "Christ lives."

And because we're blessed with so many ways to communicate, so many ways to express ourselves, we may never even have to use the words, "Christ lives," to communicate to another person that Christ's love is present in human form. In our human form.

I have always loved St. Theresa's words:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
No hands but yours, no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which is to look out
Christ's compassion to the world;
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.

I think Mark Littleton's words beautifully illustrate some of the ways Christ is present in the world through human bodies. Some of the ways people can say, "Christ lives," because Christ's love is present here and now in a human form.

Compassion.

The stoop of a listening father.

The touch and wink of a passing nurse.

The gnarled fingers of a grandmother steadying a swing.

The clench of a surgeon's teeth as he begins his cut.

The open hand and pocketbook of a traveling Samaritan.

The dew of heaven on dry lips.

To say, "Christ lives," is to say Christ's liberating, healing, reconciling love is present in human form. In our human form.

I think a lot of people are reticent to say Christ lives, Christ is present, within their human form. Within their body. They look at their lives, they look at their bodies, and they say, "no way, just look at me. I have so many flaws and imperfections. I feel so worn or tired. I have all these powerful desires. I can be so mean and nasty sometimes. I'm really selfish sometimes. I don't love everybody all the time. I don't do much for other people. There's no way Christ is present within this deeply flawed and imperfect body of mine."

But this is where the imagery from today's gospel lesson may be instructive. The risen Christ is present in this world with all the scars that come from living in this world as an embodied human being. He's the risen Christ, the living Christ, human scars and all.

Perhaps the scars the risen living Christ bears can represent all the scars, flaws and imperfections that mark our own lives as human beings who live in this scarred, flawed and

imperfect world. We all have human scars. Living in this world as embodied human beings scars us. Physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. We're all imperfect and flawed.

Proclaiming, "Christ lives," being Christ-like, doesn't mean we're not messed up and screwed up in some ways. It doesn't mean we have our act together. It doesn't mean we're not mean and nasty sometimes. Selfish sometimes. Down and out sometimes. Confused most of the time.

No, we can be all those things. Let's face it, we *are* all those things, and yet we can still proclaim "Christ lives." Because Christ does live within our scarred bodies. Christ does live within our imperfect, flawed and screwed up lives.

In fact, that's the only way Christ can live in this world, that's the only way Christ can be present in human life—in imperfect, flawed and screwed up lives—because each and every human being on this planet is imperfect, flawed and screwed up. There's no perfect, unflawed, super-holy, unselfish, all-loving person for Christ to embody on this earth. There's just countless people just like us.

But that's precisely what makes Christ's presence in human life so incredibly beautiful and powerful. To see Christ's presence shine through so many different people, each with their own unique way of being imperfect, flawed and screwed up is so incredibly beautiful and powerful.

To see a selfish person give something away.

To see an impatient person who dominates conversations stop to listen to another person.

To see a person who can be quite mean and nasty act with kindness and compassion toward another.

To see a person who's often indifferent advocate passionately for justice.

All beautiful and powerful ways of seeing that Christ lives in and works through scarred human bodies. Imperfect human lives.

So go home, look in the mirror, and know that Christ is present within you. Christ lives within you.

Look in the mirror every day and ask yourself, "how many ways can I say, 'Christ lives,' today?"