



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Eucharist with Prayer for Healing

23rd September 2020

Readings:

Proverbs 30:5-9

Psalm 119:105-122

Luke 9:1-6

Padre Pio

Today, much of the Christian world will remember a rather extraordinary priest known as Padre Pio. An Italian friar and mystic who is said to have received the stigmata on his hands and side, wounds corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus.

A deeply spiritual man from an early age, but not particularly well educated, he was admitted to the order of Friars Minor in Italy at 15, and ordained priest at 23. His masses would include long pauses of contemplative silence and could go on for hours.

Gradually, more and more people would come to him for spiritual counsel and he became a hugely popular figure, particularly for his pastoral work, hearing thousands of confessions. A somewhat controversial figure too, and the Catholic church had periods of being suspicious of him, and barring him from saying mass. But eventually, he was canonized in 2002, and became the most popular saint in Italy, well known for the red wounds on his hands that never healed.

Padre Pio perhaps shows us in his life, quite literally, the concept of the 'wounded healer'. This concept was created by the priest and theologian, Henri Nouwen who suffered depression. He wrote this:

Nobody escapes being wounded We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually The main question is not 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others'?

When our wounds cease to be a source of shame and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers. Jesus is God's wounded healer; through his wounds we are healed. Jesus' suffering and death brought joy and life. His humiliation brought glory, his rejection brought a community of love. As followers of Jesus we can also allow our wounds to bring healing to others. That is quite a tall order. But what it means I think is that the sorrows and vulnerability we experience in life can in fact make us more compassionate people, able to reach out to others and comfort them in the name of Christ. That is not to say that we should not call out bullying, abuse or injustice when we see it. Our gospel today showed the twelve being sent out with power and authority to bring healing. But they were vulnerable, dependent upon hospitality and good will. If they didn't receive a welcome, they were to shake the dust from their feet and move on. And no doubt that did happen, if Jesus was warning them that it might.

Healing and wholeness are part of the kingdom of God. May we, who come to Christ's table as broken and imperfect find his grace and healing, and be channels of his peace to others.