

Behold the Lamb 1: Golden Scars

Another Lent. We don ashes as a sign of repentance. We let go of vain things in order to take up what matters. May I suggest you walk this next 47 days with the staff of Desert Stream/Living Waters Ministries? We repent on behalf of the Church for her failure to represent Jesus well to fellow members and to the world.

No bitter or dour penitents we. We are her. We love the Church and are subject to her errors. We take our places as victims and perpetrators of the Bride who aspires and falls flat on her face. So do we, face down at her altar, signed by dust, sorry.

We tasted this together at our Living Waters Training in Malibu Canyon. After we allowed Jesus to reveal our deepest wounds, we gathered in silence before the Cross and sought mercy to extend to our most prominent wound-ers. Remarkable that the majority of persons who testified named Christians as their perpetrators: struck down (but not destroyed), these included the ex-wife of a distinguished doctor who left her for a newer model, the son of a devout father who abandoned faith and family for the swinging culture of the 70's, the minister thrown under the bus by colleagues who could do without him. The impact: a temptation to close our hearts to the very community that could be our healing.

But God who is rich in mercy invited us to activate His ace-in-the-hole: forgiving our captors and so breaking the chains that bind us to them. Forgiveness turns the enemy's schemes on their ear and provokes a greater good through us; it reclaims our wounds, especially 'Christian' wounds, as a source of healing. Divine Mercy alone has power to transform the original offense into a fountain of life, first to broken members of the Bride then out to the world.

A good way to conceptualize divine mercy was offered by a dear friend of Desert Stream. At our training, she noticed the heightened beauty of the broken ones who testified of mercy to remake them; she offered the metaphor of the Japanese art of 'kintsugi', whereby gold is mixed with reparative lacquer in reconstructing shattered ceramics. The purpose is to honor the history, however broken, of the object and exquisitely to incorporate the repair into the piece instead of disguising it. As the photo reveals, the object is beautified by its golden scar, becoming lovelier in its repair than in its original wholeness.

So this Lent we proceed to honor our histories of wounding, especially church wounding. In the power of repentance and forgiveness, we shall allow Jesus to gild the gashes so He can shine upon our prayers and make her more beautiful. We want beauty for ashes, beginning with ourselves and extending to the whole Bride. Might you join us this Lent as we identify our corporate sins, repent, and ask for mercy to make wounds wondrous for our fellow members and the world?

'On this Ash Wednesday, Jesus, we repent of any hardening of our hearts due to wounds incurred by Christians. We are not that clever: the gashes from one fan out from us to many in this one

body. We turn to You—the Head of the Body, the Lamb who was slain—and ask for patience to wait before You this Lent. Grant us Your heart for Your bride, beginning with mercy for us. May we extend mercy liberally this Lent to our captors. Free us to free others! Forgive us for resisting who You love. Gild our gashes in the power of Almighty Mercy, we pray.'