

Year A, April 16, 2017
Easter Sunday
Christ Church, Mexia

Christ is risen! That joyous acclamation for the Easter Season lifts our spirits, and we have our Alleluias back! It's hard to know what to add on this glorious day, made even better by the Sacrament of Baptism that will follow shortly.

So, let me just share a short story with you that was shared with me by one of my West Point classmates. "(My grandfather), some ninety plus years, sat feebly on the patio bench. He didn't move, just sat with his head down staring at his hands. When I sat down beside him he didn't acknowledge my presence and the longer I sat, (the more) I wondered if he was OK.

Finally, not really wanting to disturb him but wanting to check on him at the same time, I asked him if he was OK. He raised his head, looked at me and smiled. 'Yes, I'm fine. Thank you for asking,' he said in a clear strong voice. 'I didn't mean to disturb you, Grandpa, but you were just sitting here staring at your hands and I wanted to make sure you were OK,' I explained.

'Have you ever looked at your hands,' he asked. 'I mean really looked at your hands?' I slowly opened my hands and stared down at them. I turned them over, palms up and then palms down. No, I guess I had never really looked at my hands as I tried to figure out the point he was trying to make. (He) smiled and related (the following):

'Stop and think for a moment about the hands you have, how they have served you well throughout your years. These hands, though wrinkled, shriveled and weak have been the tools I have used all my life to reach out and grab and embrace life. They put food in my mouth and clothes on my back. As a child, my mother taught me to fold them in prayer. They tied my shoes and pulled on my boots. They have been dirty, scraped and raw, swollen and bent. They were uneasy and clumsy when I tried to hold my newborn son.

Decorated with my wedding band they showed the world that I was married and loved someone special. They trembled and shook when I buried my parents, and my spouse, and when I walked my daughter down the aisle. They have covered my face, combed my hair, and washed and cleansed the rest of my body. And to this day, when not

much of anything else works real well, these hands hold me up, lay me down, and again continue to fold in prayer.

These hands are the mark of where I've been and the ruggedness of my life. But more importantly, it will be these hands that God will reach out and take when he leads me home. And with my hands He will lift me to His side and there I will use these hands to touch the face of Christ.'

Recall now the nail-scarred hands of Jesus, what they might look like, and all that he has done for us. All that he used his hands to accomplish when he was here as one of us. And in a few minutes, when we renew our baptismal covenant, I'd like to ask that you look at your hands while you listen to the commitments you will make again, and think about how your hands will be used to accomplish them.

Then afterward I'd like for you to think about what it will be like one day to reach out and touch the face of God, thanks to Jesus! Christ is risen!

In the name of the one God, the Creator, the Word, and the Spirit.

Amen.