

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Five Wounds

That looks very medieval,” someone said to me. He was looking at my lapel, where I was wearing a pin of what’s commonly called the Jerusalem Cross—actually, five crosses which, symbolically, represent the five wounds of Jesus Christ.

I admit: It does look like something that might be worn by a knight on a crusade. And maybe, at times, I do feel like I’m crusading for something—everything from good grammar to the salvation of souls—but, for me, the Jerusalem Cross has a deeper, more personal reference.

In 2000, during the Jubilee year, my wife and I had the good fortune of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome. We visited many of the sites that are holiest to our faith, walking the same ground and seeing the same landscape as Christ. We walked along the Sea of Galilee. (My wife even picked up some pebbles to bring home!) We prayed a rosary in the Garden of Gethsemane. We touched the rock that held the cross. It was a deeply moving, deeply humbling journey, and Siobhain and I came away from it with many unexpected graces. One of them, I believe, is my vocation.

And in that vocation, there is a distinct connection to Christ and His Cross.

In his ministry of the altar, the deacon has a particular relationship to the chalice. He prepares it for the Eucharistic sacrifice, elevates it during the doxology, offers it to the faithful at communion, and purifies it after. In that way, the deacon shares a unique bond to the blood of the Passion—the blood which poured from the five wounds of Christ on Calvary, the wounds that are immortalized and memorialized in the Jerusalem Cross.

When I wear that cross, it serves to remind me, and others, of my connection to Christ’s suffering and death. (In fact, after ordination, I’ve chosen to begin wearing that emblem on my stole, where it will cross my heart—binding me more deeply and more intimately to a ministry of sacrifice, service and love.)

This Sunday, Easter, we will celebrate a resurrection, and our own redemption—salvation that comes our way because of the empty tomb and the glorified savior. It is the greatest feast of our calendar, and a source of unending wonder and joy. It’s astonishing to think that what began on Easter has spread around the globe, multiple times, and in every language imaginable.

But let’s never forget: It’s rooted in the rock that I touched in Jerusalem.

It is tethered to a cross that held a battered body, and the blood that stained the ground from five deep wounds. One man’s pain has opened to us the gates of Paradise.

See that when you see the Jerusalem Cross—and you’ll see something more than “medieval.”

You just might see something miraculous. Happy Easter!

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ED. NOTE: The Jerusalem Cross, also known as Crusaders’ Cross, is a Christian symbol consisting of a large Greek cross surrounded by four smaller Greek crosses, one in each quadrant. The simpler form of the cross is known as the “Crusaders’ Cross”, because it was on the papal banner given to the Crusaders by Pope Urban II for the First Crusade, and was a symbol of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The four smaller crosses symbolize either the four books of the Gospel or the four directions in which the Word of Christ spread from Jerusalem. Alternatively, all five crosses can symbolize the five wounds of Christ during the Passion.