

**My piano bench at home is scarred with scrapes and scratches. My parents bought the piano used in 1955 for \$150. When we were kids, we kept our music on top of the piano. The only way to get it was to climb on the bench and reach. We scuffed it with our shoes; we scraped it with our toys--it doesn't look pretty. Every so often, we say, "Somebody could refinish this. It's flat. You could sand it down, put on a coat of paint, and it'd look good as new." But we always decide against it, because those scratches make it our bench. They remind us of the beating that piano took in order to provide music for our home.**

**Scars tell stories. Just ask someone who's had surgery. They often show off their scars whether or not you want to see them. Or ask a war veteran. They've got stories behind every scar, and medals too. Some scars are not so visible. They come from words people said to us or decisions we made that now we regret. Sometimes we bring the scars on ourselves; they are signs of our own foolishness. Sometimes they happen to us most unfairly, accidents to innocent victims. Some scars we hide for embarrassment; others we show proudly as proof of our suffering.**

**Christians share a common scar, the cross of Jesus Christ. When you think about it, the crucifixion is nothing to be proud of. The leader who seemed so popular was abandoned by the crowds, accused by one of his closest friends, apprehended, tried, found guilty of insurrection, and condemned to capital punishment, death on a cross. The cross should have been a symbol of failure. In other areas of his life, Jesus enjoyed unparalleled success--as a preacher, a healer, a miracle-worker. If the cross is a sign of success, it's the success of his enemies. It's the scar left on Christianity. In fact, the earliest representation we have of the cross of Christ dates from the fifth century. Up until that time, it seems, Christians were too embarrassed about the cross to carve it on their doors, to paint it on their walls, or to erect it above their buildings. Now we show it off, as if we've had open heart.**

**In lifting up the cross Christians make peace with our sufferings. We could be ashamed of them; we could gripe about them, but instead we bring them to the cross. There our sufferings have been conquered. We carry our cross; we don't drag it along. We accept scars, scuffs, and scratches as a part of this imperfect life, with faith in a perfect life. The cross offers us a way out of despair, complaints, and frustrations. It offers us a way to accept our limits in peace, because it knows no limits in promise.**