

LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



“WITH COMPASSION, JESUS REACH OUT HIS HAND . . .”

Loving God, let my actions reflect your mercy so others may come to know your compassion and healing grace. Amen

This month . . . Reflections on ☞ Compassion ☞

“Compassion is a wounding of the heart which love extends to all without distinction.” John Ruusbroec

Compassion, from its Latin derivative, means to ‘suffer with’. It is not surface sympathy, but rather a powerful, compelling feeling that comes from a place where our deepest emotions reside. To have compassion towards another means we “suffer with” a person with an intensity that touches a vulnerable space in our soul, inviting us and challenging us to enter into and share the brokenness of humanity.

God is compassionate and his compassion became visible through his son Jesus Christ. Compassion characterizes the ministry of Christ. If we look closely to the words and actions of Jesus we can gain greater knowledge into the nature of God’s compassion.

Jesus said, “Be merciful as your father is merciful.” Here is our invitation to be participants in God’s compassionate nature, becoming expressions of his mercy for those who weep, who mourn, who are hungry, the despised. When we look at the events of healing that Christ performed, we find that the healing itself was not the center of the action, but his compassion. He “was moved with compassion” for the one who suffered: the hungry (Mk 8:2), the blind (Matt 9:27), the leper (Mk 1:41), the widow of Nain burying her only son (Lk 7:13), the harassed and helpless (Matt 9:36). Jesus’ acts of compassion challenge us to “be moved” to respond to those broken by the world. Prayer guides our response, reminding us that God’s compassion is a radical call to servant-ministry.

How Do We Respond?

Have the mind of Christ: To be compassionate as God is compassionate is to have the mind of Christ. We relate to each other as Christ relates to us in compassionate servant-ministry and in humility. We are the body of Christ. Our relationship with Christ defines our relationship with others, challenging us to be deeply involved in the struggles of humanity.

Pray: Discipleship/servant-ministry and the discipline of prayer are mutually important. In prayer the Spirit reveals to us the compassion of God and directs our actions, expanding our hearts to embrace all persons, even our enemies. Compassionate prayer draws us closer to God’s healing spirit, allowing us to become one with those for whom we pray and minister.

Believe: Believe you can make a difference. John 14:12 holds a profound challenge and promise: “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

Act: Compassionate confrontation is acting with the mind of Christ on behalf of God’s peace and justice. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19

Spiritual Reflections
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Harriet White, Evangelist



IN THE GARDEN . . .

The flower symbolism associated with the 'peony' is compassion.

Scripture focus:

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Philippians 2:1-2 NIV

"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry . . ." Matthew 15:32 NIV

"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

1 Peter 3: 8-9 NIV

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32 NIV

"In all your efforts, continue to trust in my grace and respond in love to the leadings of my Spirit. If you will come before me in unity and love I will bless you with a great outpouring of compassion both for one another and for the world into which you are sent." Doctrine and Covenants 157:17 Community of Christ

Reflection moment . . .

God is compassion. In Exodus the Lord said, "I have heard the cry of my people and I will rescue them." The basic spiritual question we must ask ourselves is, "Whose cries do we hear and what have we done to rescue them?"

In perspective . . .

"Compassion is the sacrament of concern. To the person who is compassionate, tragedy is not a news report. It is a call to respond."

Joan Chittister



Compassion: The Old Man and the Scorpion

Once there was a old man who used to meditate every morning under a tree on the bank of the Ganges River in India. One morning, having finished his meditation, the old man opened his eyes and saw a scorpion floating helplessly in the strong current of the river. As the scorpion was pulled close to the tree, it got caught in the long tree roots that branched out into the river. The scorpion struggled frantically to free itself but got more and more entangled in the tree roots.

When the old man saw this, he immediately stretched himself onto the extended roots and reached out to rescue the drowning scorpion. But as soon as he touched it, the animal jerked and stung him wildly. Instinctively, the man withdrew his hand and after having regained his balance, he once again stretched himself out along the roots to save the scorpion. Every time the old man came within reach, the scorpion stung him so badly with its poisonous tail that his hand became swollen and bloody and his face distorted by pain.

At that moment, a passerby saw the old man stretched out on the roots struggling with the scorpion and shouted: "Hey, stupid old man. What's wrong with you? Only a fool risks his life for the sake of an ugly, useless creature. Don't you know that you may kill yourself to save that ungrateful animal?"

Slowly the old man turned his head, and looking calmly in the stranger's eyes, he said: "Friend, because it is the nature of the scorpion to sting, why should I give up my own nature to save?"

"Seeds of Hope" by Henri Nouwen, Bantam Books 1989

Of the story "Compassion: The Old Man and the Scorpion", Henri Nouwen writes . . . "Well, that's the question: Why should we give up our nature to be compassionate even when we get stung in a biting, stinging world? The story about the old man and the scorpion holds out a great challenge to a society . . . It challenges us to show that to embrace is more human than to reject, that to kiss is more human than to bite, to behold more human than to stare. To be friends more human than to be rivals, to make peace more human than to make war--in short, that compassion is more human than strife."

"Seeds of Hope" by Henri Nouwen, Bantam Books 1989