

# The Gift of Compassion

**Theme** “Compassion, to be with others when and where they suffer and to willingly enter into a fellowship of the weak, is God’s way to justice and peace among people.”

-- Henri Nouwen (*Here and Now*)

**Environment** Circle of chairs; small table in center with red cloth and white candle.



## Opening Song

“The Servant Song” (From *Scripture in Song* by Richard Gillard)

### Opening Prayer (All)

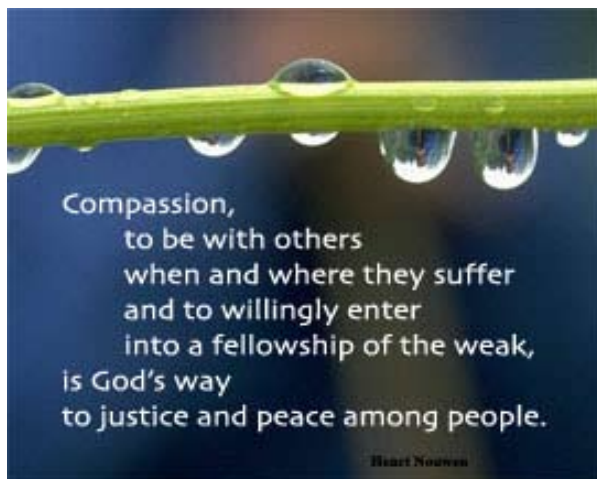
God of compassion, we come with hearts open to hear your call to us to be compassionate as You are compassionate. We are so often bound up in our own needs and fail to reach out to others in their needs. We fear to be with the weak and suffering, for to do so means to be with our own weakness, our own dependence, and our own suffering that needs the touch of another.

Be with us now, touch us with your Spirit, that we may listen with attentive hearts. We know our need for your presence with us. Teach us to know our need for each other so that we may become the people of compassion you have called us to be. We praise and give you thanks today and every day, O Loving, Gentle God. Amen.

## Scripture Readings

**Presider** Let us listen to the message of God’s compassion in the Scriptures.

Early and often did Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, send personal messengers to them, for God had compassion on the people who belonged to God. (2 Chronicles 36:15)



*Pause for Reflection*

A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.” (Mark 1:40-41)

*Pause for Reflection*

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him (the victim of robbers) was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. (Luke 10:33-34)

*Pause for Reflection*

Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. (1 Peter 3:8)

*Pause for Reflection*

### Prayer Response

*Antiphon: Look upon us with compassion,  
O God, and heal us.*

1) Blessed are you, and praiseworthy,  
O God of our ancestors,  
and glorious forever is your name.

2) For you are just in all you have done;  
and your deeds are faultless, all your ways right,  
and all your judgments proper.

1) For we have sinned and transgressed  
by departing from you,  
and we have done every kind of evil.

2) For your name’s sake,  
do not deliver us up forever,  
or make void your covenant.

1) But with contrite heart and humble  
spirit let us be received  
for those who trust in you cannot  
be put to shame.

2) And now we follow you with our whole heart,  
we fear you and we pray to you.

## Reading

“Compassion” pp104-105, Chapter VIII; *Here and Now* by Henri Nouwen (Crossroad Publishing Company)

**Reflection** What has been an experience of compassion in your life?

## Prayer

O Lord! Make my self such  
that I may have love for all beings,

Joy in the meritorious,  
unstinted sympathy for the distressed

And tolerance towards the perversely inclined.

O Lord! May my soul always find fulfillment,  
in friendship and love towards all beings,

In all the virtuous, in compassion  
toward all suffering creatures,

And in remaining neutral towards  
those hostile to me.

This is my prayer.

(ancient jain prayer of love for all, World Prayer)

## Reading

Listening to the words  
of compassion as  
experienced by Mattie  
Stepanek -- “Shared  
Tears,” p. 9, *Hope  
through Heartsongs*.

## Time for Shared

### Reflection

- What most touched you as you listened to the readings and joined the prayers?



- What changes are needed in your life in order to become a truly compassionate person?
- Where in our world today do you see the most need for a compassionate presence? How can you be that presence?



## Closing

**Prayer** “Compassion” by Steinar Almélid (*World Prayers*)

With humbleness,  
may I face everyone with compassion

With devotion to enlightened life  
may I abide in true compassion

So that others may know their true Heart,  
may I have the wisdom and True Knowledge  
to bring out the best in everyone

With compassion for this world  
with all and everyone in it,  
may I fight in every way for a better world,  
for the generations to come

Accepting any hardship for myself,  
may I abide in the Energy of the Universe,  
the source of wisdom and compassion

Empowered may I have true compassion  
in sharing the wisdom of life and death with others,  
by being present in meditation,  
of any shape or form of everyday life  
May this branch of Love be of benefit

**Song** Repeat verse 1 of “The Servant Song”

## Acknowledgments

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“Mother of Compassion” icon: Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB. Used with permission.  
Graphic of a mother holding a child: “Woman Song II.”