

If we were asked to choose one word to describe Jesus, I suspect that many of us would say 'com-passion'. In a book on that subject, authors McNeill, Nouwen and Morrison said, 'When Jesus was moved to compassion, the source of all life trembled, the ground of all love burst open, and the abyss of God's immense, inexhaustible and unfathomable tenderness revealed itself.' You could say, with some justification, that Jesus is the archetypal Good Samaritan sent by God the Father to minister to all who feel wounded by their life experiences.

St Thomas Aquinas said that 'Compassion is heartfelt identification with another's distress, driving us to do what we can to help ... As far as outward activity is concerned, compassion is the Christian's whole rule of life.' Expressed in contemporary language, we could say that compassion is empathy for a person who suffers, the intuitive ability to enter into and understand the inner world of another person and to communicate that understanding to him or to her. It could be said that there are two interrelated forms of compassion, affective and effective.

St Vincent de Paul, the patron of charitable works, described affective

COMPASSION AS THE RULE OF LIFE

compassion in these words, 'We must open our hearts so that they become responsive to the sufferings and miseries of the neighbour. We should pray to God to give us a true spirit of mercy and compassion, which is in truth the spirit of God within you.' The emotion of compassion, though important is not enough. It needs to find expression in appropriate forms of action.

Speaking about effective compassion Vincent stated, 'Sentiments of love of God, of kindness, of good will, good as these may be, are often suspect if they do not result in good deeds ... We should be on our guard, for it is possible to be well mannered and filled with noble sentiments and yet stop there.' He summed up his position when he said: 'In so far as

is possible, the hand should be conformed to the heart.' What he had in mind is well illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Not only did his heart go out to the wounded man on the roadside, he ministered to him, brought him to an inn, and paid for his ongoing care. Compassion without appropriate action is sentimentality while action without compassion is condescension. But compassion expressed in appropriate action is Emmanuel, God-with-us. ■

— Pat Collins

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Sanctus

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord ...

After the Consecration

The mystery of faith.

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

Showing the Eucharist to the people, the priest says:
Behold the Lamb of God, ...

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon (Cf. Ps 83:4-5)

The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for her young: by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house, for ever singing your praise.

Prayer after Communion

Having consumed these gifts, we pray, O Lord, that, by our participation in this mystery, its saving effects upon us may grow.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Reflection

How have you recently behaved like a Samaritan? Thank God for doing good.



Lesson

It's about being a neighbour, and if you live that call deeply you will realise there is no 'them'; there is only 'us.' There are no strangers, only friends.



Prayer

Lord, make us realise our equal human dignity in your sight. Move us to your kind of compassion that we might be a neighbour to all we meet. Amen.

