

**Lectionary**  
Readings for every day  
You Select!



in the HCUC

**No. 10**

**For 4 July 2010**

**Dear Friends**

This is another issue devoted to compassion—as a way of life. I made brief reference to the “Charter for Compassion” in No. 9 issue. A little more background to the Charter may be helpful as well as interesting.

Each year a conference on Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) brings together the world’s most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives—in only 18 minutes! It is awarded annually to three exceptional individuals who each receive \$100,000 and, more importantly, the granting of “One wish to Change the World”. The prize was awarded to Karen Armstrong who wished to work with others to create such a charter. It seems to be her passionate response to the idea of what “One Wish” does she have to “Change the World”. Actually, it got me thinking: Do I have One Wish to Change the World? If so, what is it? — and could I express it in 18 minutes? How about your wish?

The first sentence of the Charter reads: “The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religions, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves.”

Compassion and love are constantly seeking ways to bridge the sense of our individual separation from one another. It helps to be aware that each of us is already joined. Our oneness is prior to our diversity and sense of separation. Yes we are separate—separate body, mind and ego. But beneath this is the fact that each of us has the common path to walk and the same experience; namely the body, mind and separate ego dies. Nobody escapes. But as well as having this in common we also have in common our inner undying Self. Our inner divine being is from, and of, the external never-born, never-dying Being. So the bridge of compassion rests on these twin foundations. It is a bridge built from two sides. From one we become aware of our common mortality, and from the other side of our sense of separation we build an awareness that each person we meet, no matter what attitudes of mind they have, or what they do, or how much they repulse us, has within them as their essence a divinity and a deathless quality of life—just as you and I do.

Prior to our sense of ‘having nothing in common’ with this or that person or group is the reality of underlying oneness. In this sense God, love and compassion already and always exist. Becoming aware of this is the trick and the task.

**Sincerely - Lester**

	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 5 July:	145:2-9	Hosea 2:16-18,21,22	Matt 9:18-26
Tuesday 6 July:	103:8-12	Hosea 8:4-7,11-13	Matt 9:32-38
Wednesday 7 July:	115:3-10	Hosea 10:1-3,7,8,12	Matt 10:1-7
Thursday 8 July:	105:1-7	Hosea 11:1,3,4,8,9	Matt 10:7-15
Friday 9 July:	80:1-7	Hosea 14:2-10	Matt 10:16-23
Saturday 10 July:	51:1-7	Isa 6:1-8	Matt 10:24-33
<b>Sunday 11 July <u>Pentecost 7</u></b>			
Ps 82; Amos 7:1-7; Col 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37			

	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 12 July:	50:7-15	Isa 11:11-17	Matt 10:34-11:1
Tuesday 13 July:	48:1-7	Isa 7:1-9	Matt 11:20-24
Wednesday 14 July:	94:5-11	Isa 10:5-7,13-16	Matt 11:25-27
Thursday 15 July:	102:14-21	Isa 26:7-9,16-19	Matt 11:28-30
Friday 16 July:	32:1-8	Isa 38:1-6,21-22	Matt 12:1-8
Saturday 17 July:	10:1-5a,12	7-8(sic) Micah 2:1-5	Matt 12:14-21
<b>Sunday 18 July <u>Pentecost 8</u></b>			
Ps 52; Amos 8:1-12; Col 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42			

	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 19 July:	50:3-7,14	Micah 6:1-4,6-8	Matt 12:38-42
Tuesday 20 July:	85:1-7	Micah 7:14,15,18-20	Matt 12:46-end
Wednesday 21 July:	70	Jer 1:1,4-10	Matt 13:1-9
Thursday 22 July:	36:5-10	Jer 2:1-3,7-8,12-13	Matt 13:10-17
Friday 23 July:	23	Jer 3:14-17	Matt 13:18-23
Saturday 24 July:	84:1-6	Jer 7:1-11	Matt 13:24-30
<b>Sunday 25 July <u>Pentecost 9</u></b>			
Ps 85; Hosea 1:2-10; Col 2:6-15(16-19); Luke 11:1-13			

## STEPS TOWARDS COMPASSION

Sometimes compassion just wells up from within us and is right there in a particular situation. An example. Remember the destructive riots in Los Angeles back in 1992? One scene was shown on our TV screens again and again. It showed a white truck driver being dragged from his cab and being kicked and beaten. One man who came to his aid was Bobby Green. When asked why he risked his life to stop the beating, he said “It felt like I was getting hurt.” To draw that out for a moment, it is as if he was saying “I felt as if I was being kicked in the guts.” And to take that another step, it links to the phrase used in the King James Bible which uses ‘bowels of mercy’, which is usually translated today in our versions as mercy, kindness and compassion. [Examples of ‘bowels of mercy’ can be found in Phil 1:8 & 12; Col 3:12]

‘Bowels of mercy’ is not just a thought in the head, or a warm feeling in the heart. It is a deep gut experience that usually leads into action.

The reality is that we have to learn how to be compassionate, just as we have to discipline and train ourselves in the art of loving. Karen Armstrong in her autobiography *The Spiral Staircase* writes about this discipline. She had to use it while writing a book on Mohammed. She writes “... I tried not to dismiss an idea that seemed initially alien, but to ask repeatedly ‘Why?’ until, finally the idea, doctrine or practice became transparent and I could see the living kernel of truth within—an insight that quickened my own pulse. I would not leave an idea until I could to some extent experience it myself...”.

Sam Keen in *Hymns to an Unknown God* also underlines steps in learning how to love and be compassionate. First there has to be the intention. He says his mother taught him that love has one part that is sweet and easy and another part that is hard and mean ‘opening your heart again and again to somebody with whom you are angry, can’t stand, and do not like’. Then there is an act of imagination to begin to understand strangers, rivals and those who live on ‘the other side of the railway tracks’. Next is the attempt to feel. What is it like to feel and be this other person? Finally we move from the edge into the centre of love and compassion. Them like Bobby Green (above) it feels “like I was getting hurt”.

Someone has said of this: ‘My single, separate ego becomes a plural soul’.

## THE BEST NAME FOR GOD ...

- \* Matthew Fox says that “the surest way of discerning if you have pity or compassion with another is to answer the question: ‘Do you celebrate with this same person or group of people?’”
- \* And Max Schuler takes for granted the fact that joy and celebration make up the better half of the whole that compassion is about. He quotes the proverb: A sorrow shared is sorrow halved; joy shared is a joy doubled.
- \* “Compassion is not feelings of pity but feelings of togetherness. It is this awareness of togetherness that urges us to rejoice at another’s joy and to grieve at another’s sorrow.”

- M Fox

What is Compassion? asks Tibetan monk Sogyal Rinpoche. He answers: “It is not simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering, not simply a warmth of heart toward the person before you, or a clear recognition of their need or pain. It is also a sustained and practical determination to do whatever is possible and necessary to help alleviate their suffering.”

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Jesus is a great example of this compassion in action. We need only look at his story of the Good Samaritan to see that compassion involved:

- Going to the man lying in the ditch;
- Binding his wounds;
- Pouring on oil and wine;
- Putting him on his donkey;
- Getting him to an inn;
- Making sure caring for him will continue.

It is clear Jesus was compassionate—that is why people approached him; they were seeking compassion.

Meister Eckhart declares:

You may call God love; you may call God goodness; but the best name for God is compassion.