



# COMPASSION QUARTERLY

*(of the Companions and Associates of the Compassionate Hearts of Jesus and Mary)*

*Issue 1: LENT 2017*

GIVING BIRTH to a movement like CCHJM has been an interesting experience. What had been gestating for a long time was suddenly launched on the world: what will happen to it. Will it needed? How will it be received? Might it have any effect? What will happen to it? These, and other, question are around.

It was re-assuring to discover that there was interest in the Association to the extent that many have expressed their appreciation for this development and some have already become Companions. Some have said how much they value what we offer but don't feel able to take on the Rule of a Companion. And a few have asked if there might be another level of 'belonging' to CCHJM – a kind of associate or 'friend' membership – for those who would like to be connected and who want to foster a more compassionate heart but who don't feel able to commit to the full membership promises, for whatever reason.

The original idea behind CCHJM was to enable compassion to express itself in a world where it is often absent. So as this desire has emerged as a result of giving expression to the Compassionate Hearts I am proposing that we also welcome *Associates* who can belong with us.

*Associates* would accept the Aims of the Association and promise to seek ways of fostering compassion in their hearts and live out of that charism. They would also receive this *Quarterly* but would not take on the *Rule* of a *Companion*. This might be a means whereby a Christian approach to compassion would spread more widely.

The *Prayer for all Companions* has also been updated as it did not scan well. The version now on the website is:  
*Merciful God, as we are embraced by your Divine Compassion  
found in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,  
so may we live with that same Compassion  
for all people and the whole of Your Creation.  
This we ask in the name of Him whose Love enfolds all,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



## LENT and COMPASSION

“WHAT ARE YOU GIVING UP FOR LENT?” is a question that one either hears asked or our own inner voice poses: “What am I giving up for Lent?” And quite rightly so, for Lent is a season of penitence and fasting. As the Liturgy for Ash Wednesday says, we are invited: ‘to observe ... a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy word.’

As this new *Spiritual Association* is launched at the beginning of Lent it may be that the practice of compassion is a discipline many might find helpful. For Lent provides an ideal time to review how we live out the calling to be “compassionate as our Father is compassionate” (Lk.6:36: NJB). It’s part of Luke’s ‘Sermon on the Plain’ which concerns how we might both live and know a life that is ‘blessed’. So, reading on, Jesus tells His disciples:

*‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged;  
do not condemn, and you will not be condemned;  
forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

*Give, and there will be gifts for you.*

*A good measure, pressed down, shaken together,  
and overflowing, will be poured into your lap;  
for the standard you use*

*will be the standard used for you.’ (Lk.6:37-38)*

Ouch! There’s more than enough here to keep one going through Lent and beyond. If only I could change my heart so that it were like Jesus’! And that’s the work of a lifetime, as the saints knew and to the practice of which they gave themselves. And it all begins with me.

Alongside showing compassion towards others we also need to learn how to be compassionate towards ourselves.

As HE Mgr. William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore has written: "Lent teaches us how to live the love and compassion of Christ. In his ministry on earth, Jesus expressed God's love to the needy, the sick, the lepers. His mercy culminated on the cross, when Christ forgave his enemies and offered his life": He went on to ask Christians "to be moved by the suffering of others, the poor, the marginalized, those who are ostracized by society. May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all."

The Archbishop describes "Lent as a season of opportunity for 'metanoia', which means a change of mind and heart". "Our internal renewal - he continues - makes us grasp the immense mystery of the Father's love for us: He wants to be one with us. This desire of God to be close to us is expressed in his incarnation at Christmas and finds its perfect fulfilment in the Paschal Mystery". "In Christ - explains the message - God revealed himself as love. It is love in its most extreme form. God showed his compassion for humanity through the incarnation of Christ. Through this solidarity we have all become brothers and sisters in Christ".

The Archbishop adds: "Thanks to our baptismal vocation as Christians, we are, by extension, the hands and feet of Christ in this world. Extending compassion for others, our humanity grows in fullness. It is time, therefore, that the Church, once again, is a Church of mercy and compassion: a sacrament of God's mercy and compassion in Christ". Recalling the importance of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the Archbishop concluded: "I pray that this Lenten season leads us to a true conversion of heart and mind. May the love and tenderness of Christ fill us with compassion and love, so that we can be a visible sign of his love and mercy in the world."

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I also came across these words in the National Catholic Reporter: *'Today I realize with urgency the absolute seriousness of my need to study and practice nonviolence. Hitherto I have "liked" nonviolence as an idea. I have*

*"approved" it, looked with benignity upon it, praised it even earnestly. But I have not practiced it fully. My thoughts and words retaliate. I condemn and resist adversaries when I think I am unjustly treated. I revile them, even treat them with open (but polite) contempt to their face. The energy wasted in contempt, criticism and resentment is thus diverted from its true function -- insistence on truth. (Thomas Merton's Journal: 21.08.62)*

If such is the case with Merton, certainly with us. Our following the nonviolent Jesus requires the daily inner work of deepening nonviolence. And what a better time than Lent? It's a time to look deeply at what's going on inside us and, where we are violent, to repent and then to offer ourselves mercy. The more we show compassion toward ourselves, the more we will toward our neighbors.

Then as we make the social, economic, and political connections, then -- scandal of scandals! -- we can love our enemies. We can offer compassion to whatever enemy our nation foists upon us: Iraqis one day, Afghans the next. Brought low by draconian Western policies, the poor and the marginalized will have cause to rejoice. And we won't help but be able to see the link, as though forged in a foundry, between our personal spirituality and global justice.

But be forewarned. Such inner work is devilishly hard. It is the task of a lifetime, perhaps the core of the spiritual life -- to allow the light and love of God to flame within us, to non-cooperate with our own self-hatred, to "bear serenely the feeling of being displeasing to ourselves," to purloin the words of Therese of Lisieux.'



*'As Christians, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ in whom the reality of God's infinite compassion becomes concrete and tangible' (Henri Nouwen)*