



COMPASSION QUARTERLY

of the Spiritual Association of the Compassionate Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Issue 7: DIVINE COMPASSION 2018

Welcome to our seventh edition! It comes at the time when many will be celebrating the Feast of Divine Compassion – or the Sacred Heart of Jesus (closely followed by that of the Heart of Mary). But whatever it is called it can be no ‘optional extra’ in the life of the Church – or any Christian. What we celebrate is the heart of God which is full of mercy and compassion. We celebrate the deepest mystery of God.

‘When the vessel of his body was shattered in death, Christ was poured out over all the cosmos: he became in his very humanity... what he had always been by his dignity, the heart of the universe, the innermost centre of creation.’ (Karl Rahner SJ)



COMPASSION IN A TIME OF DESPAIR

Since the UK voted to withdraw from membership of the EU there have been consequences which had not been fully realised. We’ve seen a rise in xenophobic hate crimes against members of other nationalities; many Europeans living here feel insecure and others speak of a deep sense of loss at the severing of this relationship which has helped sustain peace in Europe and brought countries and peoples together who had often mistrusted each other. It has felt as if the clock was being set back. Since then a similar development has occurred in the USA as the election of Donald Trump has unleashed forces that are often antithetical to civilised behaviour – the decision to withdraw the USA from the Paris Climate Agreement being just one example amongst many. We have also witnessed the consequences of political populism as witnessed by the ‘Windrush’ scandal.

For all these reasons the existence of our Association, small as it is, is one example of how Christians have something of immense importance to offer – the conversion of the heart. As I wrote elsewhere, the Sacred Heart is not an optional extra to our faith, rather it addresses the very heart of it.

To act or speak out of spite, bigotry, hatred or self-interest; to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody and to incite hatred by denigrating others - even our enemies – diminishes us and is a denial of our common humanity. (*The Principles CHJM: Day 11*)

In his book ‘*Life of the Beloved*’ (Pub. Hodders, 1991) Henri Nouwen writes of the way we need to recognise that the ‘darkness’ that lies in the heart needs to be flooded with light and that we each need to recognise, and nurture, that we are the beloved of God’. And if that’s true for me then it’s true for all of us – no matter what we might feel about the other person. We are all *chosen* by God which means that all are worthy of our respect no matter what we may feel about them. We are *blessed* – in a right relationship with God - and called to be in a right relationship with others as well as recalling our blessedness. Nouwen suggests we spend 30 mins a day – not just 10 – sitting in the compassionate gaze of God simply allowing ourselves to be open to the blessings we receive because God wants us to be in a right relationship with us. Finally we are *broken*. We all have our hidden wounds often associated with a sense of worthlessness, loneliness, rejection etc. Such brokenness can be repressed but will then turn poisonous or it can be accepted and be the cause of us reaching out to others who are probably suffering in a similar way.

We’re called to live out of that knowledge of our being the beloved of God and to gaze upon the world with the eye of compassion rather than glaring at it with bitterness. The world needs ‘sacraments of blessedness’ if it is to be healed and made whole again and our

Association has an important part to play in overcoming the evils of hatred, prejudice and nationalism.



Heart of Jesus

Inner anguish
when it is fully grasped and embraced
reaches beyond the personal to the universal.
It is to embrace the anguish of the age,
when the age may well refuse to grieve,
preferring grievance that gives rise to violence and war.

Grief on the other hand,
however intense its anguish,
is a peacemaker,
for it is an expression of compassion.

United with the Heart of Jesus
my heart is the heart of the present age
that finds in its own depth, every malady of present
times
and, through its own conversion
becomes one with the heart that saves the world.

For to convert the heart is to put it into the saving Fire
of the Heart of Jesus.

It is to surrender my heart's grief to the Father,
who finds in it his Son's Heart,
beating with the love of the Holy Spirit for the world –
drawing down yet again, in this present age,
the Divine Mercy that saves
- and saves again.

From *Mount Carmel*, vol. 62/2, June 2014
By Mary McLaughlin OCDS



LETTERS TO THE ASSOCIATION

Dear John-Francis,

I work in many different settings and meet a lot of people from all walks of life and of all ages and nationalities. Increasingly I am hearing from people that they don't bother to read the news or that they ignore all the depressing stuff in the media – as it's just too much. So I know people who never read newspapers, for example. Part of this is also because of the influence of

the “Be positive” movement, which may be having a resurgence with the recent publication of a book on positive thinking – but I have just read Barbara Ehrenreich's book – see below – so I am better informed on the negative aspects of this movement

<http://barbaraehreich.com/bright-sided-by-barbara-ehreich/>

I watched two TV documentaries on the Rohingya people and Myanmar recently. They were harrowing. The suffering is simply terrible – women dying following violent rape; etc. When I talked about these programmes with people they mostly said: “Well, what can you do? Nothing really. Best not to think about it. It's too depressing”. Obviously I disagree. We can send money to help the refugees, but, chiefly, I feel we can stand in solidarity with all victims of such hatred (and victims of climate change, etc.) By thinking about them, praying about them, holding their suffering in our minds – somehow, it seems to me – this is helpful. When I do this, I am moved with compassion, it can bring tears to my eyes. (Thank goodness, I am thinking, I am not such a cold, hard person as I imagine myself to be.)

Peace and all joy, while we simultaneously hold this suffering in our hearts (would you agree?)

Rebecca Abbott (*Associate CHJM*)



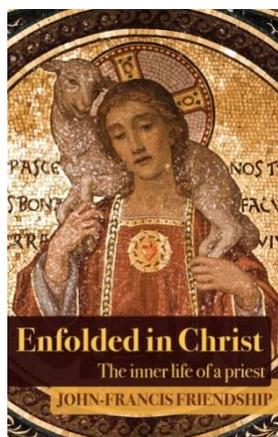
A COMANIONS' PRAYER FOR AN OPEN, COMPASSIONATE HEART

Lord,
give me strength to live in this world
without resorting to half-truths,
or simplistic viewpoints
which wilfully neglect the complexity
inherent in many situations.
Give me an open heart, grace,
and compassion where I lack it.

Give me tolerance and patience,
and strength to persevere.

In the name of Him who loves us. Amen.

- Tony T. (Associate)



++++ NEW BOOK +++++

ENFOLDED IN CHRIST - The Inner Life of a Priest

This book is concerned with 'being beneath the role', with priestly vocation rather than ministry. It draws on different spiritualities including Benedictine, Franciscan and

Ignatian to help cultivate spiritual practices and habits that will nurture awareness of Christ, sustain holy living and foster personal well-being. It's also intended to help those who work with priests and ministers (e.g. spiritual directors) to understand more of their calling.

Chapters are concerned with:

- Diaconal calling
- Confession and wholeness
- Keeping prayer fresh
- Eucharist living
- Spiritual direction and pastoral supervision
- Sexuality, the solitary life, spirituality

'John-Francis' wise, engaging and emotionally intelligent book is a timely reminder that prayer lies at the heart of the priestly life, and from that all else flows. - the Rev. Prof. Jane Shaw (Dean for Religious Life and Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University and ex. Dean of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco)

REVIEW OF THE ASSOCIATION

JUST OVER TWELVE MONTHS AGO this Association was launched and we now comprise 16 Companions and 14 Associates. Like all developments we need to review what's been happening and how we move forward so I want to share some thoughts with you and ask for your response.

Firstly, has the Association been of help to you and how has it enabled a closer union with Christ as you have sought to live out of our charism? Is anything emerging for you that the Association might help nurture? Is

anything not being addressed that you think ought to be, given our aims and purpose? Do you want to continue your membership and renew your commitment? Having said that I want to share some of my own thoughts with you.

Following writing *'Enfolded in Christ – The Inner Life of a Priest'* I realised I could have said more about how to live with greater integrity – holiness – and given greater attention to the call of Christ and conversion of the heart. The place of the Sacred Heart in my own life in Christ has been growing over the past year and whilst there are a growing number of dispersed communities (Benedictine, for example) and other new forms of online 'Monastic' life there are none which centre on how devotion to the Sacred Heart can change our own heart.

The Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and 'conversatio morum', variously translated as 'conversion of manners' or 'of life' appeal to some whilst non-monastics have expressed their commitment through vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. There exist Third Orders, Oblatures, Associations etc., but many involve a commitment to regular meetings, involved noviciates etc. So, during the coming year – if you want to remain a member and feel called to deepen your commitment, I would like to focus into the Heart of Jesus and here are some ways this might be done:

Conversion of the heart: *(this is the basis of the proposal)*

- to imitate Mary – the one who sought to live by the Divine Will;
- to live with humility . This is already part of our charism and might be developed in ecological ways;
- to live with repentance. This might involve making use of the sacrament of Reconciliation
- to live with mercy. We already recognise that *Compassion expresses God's love for humanity, and is shown especially in the hearts of Jesus and Mary.*
- to commit to adoration of the Sacred Heart of the Blessed Sacrament. To spend time in the presence of that Presence.

CONCLUSION

These are just some of my thoughts as we go forward. Over the next few weeks please pray about this and

send me an email at cchjm@outlook.com with any thoughts you may have.

John-Francis Friendship, Feast of Julian of Norwich, 2018

