

Compassion

What is it?

Compassion is a feeling that allows us to understand and to share the suffering of others. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as 'a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of other and a wish to help them.' To feel compassion is to *suffer with* another in their moment of pain. It allows us to somehow take on the suffering of those we love.

Compassion goes well beyond what we call *empathy*, the ability to feel what another is feeling. This is because simply empathy doesn't necessarily lead us to engage with helping the other person. Indeed, it can sometimes have the opposite effect, it can lead us to turn away, as if the suffering were somehow too much. We close our eyes, we hold our ears, we can't face it, we flee.

When one studies these two human responses, *compassion* and *empathy*, using neuro-imagery, one sees important differences. When confronted with troubling images of suffering with empathy there's a response associated most often with pain, while coming from compassion there is a response of empathy *and* affection, a desire to engage and to be caring and helpful.

Compassion questions our interior life

The human warmth that accompanies compassion is important as it guards our heart from being broken in the face of human suffering. Compassion questions our interior life. Do we respond to the suffering of



others by simple empathy or by a more fraternal language of caring and engagement? This is the language of compassion. Here it is a question of what kind of role we want to play when faced with suffering. We need to have a real gentleness and concern and the strength of compassion in all its forms in order to be able to help another to endure what they are suffering in their life at that precise moment.

This will perhaps not be enough and we will need other kinds of energy and interior strength to change the world. However, without the generous energy of genuine compassion we will want to escape the sufferings of others, to

flee rather than engage in order to share their burden.

Developing a compassionate conscience

In our day we are slowly developing a greater ecological awareness, a feeling for the distress of our planet. The least bit of litter or waste is seen as harmful and the smallest thing we pick up and bin properly is a positive environmental act. The same can be said of the development of a compassionate conscience. We are responsible for the spread of compassion goodness and gentleness. In our daily habits we can contribute to creating and improving the human climate of the world in which we live. Feelings of genuine contribute to the creation of a better society and a more fraternal world. In addition compassion contributes to healing, the binding up of those wounds that scar our world. These are the wounds of betrayed love and the essential relationships and affective ties in our lives. Our sufferings are most often the suffering of betrayal and deception, in small or big ways, by people we love. The only healing possible, of course, is also love. As one author puts it: 'The only kind of healing for wounded love is to love more.' Love more those who, in some way or another, have let us down or even made us suffer, rather than a refusal of love.

The Incarnation, the ultimate act of compassion

For the Christian believer, we only have to turn to the scripture, the Old and the New Testament to encounter our God, who is a God of compassion (Ps 90). As we prepare for the Feast of Christmas, we prepare for the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus, who out of compassion entered fully into the suffering of our lives, 'becoming human as we are...even to accepting death, death on a cross.' (Ph 2:6-11)

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Streaming and Website www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie email: info@stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie

Child Protection: <http://www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie/ministries/child-protection/> also www.csp.dublindiocese.ie

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COMPASSION
costs us something.

CRAIG GROESCHEL



St Mary's
Parish
Haddington
Road

Serving
the
Community

Serving
the Family

Serving the
City

St. Mary's Church Haddington Road
Christmas By Candlelight
 Saturday 15 December 7.30pm



Join us for this wonderful concert of sacred and popular Christmas music, performed by musicians of the parish & guests

Tickets €10 available after Sunday mass & on the door before the concert
 Concert 7.30 – 8.45pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies
 Please support this community festive event



St Stephens, The Pepper Canister
**Ecumenical Service
 of the
 Nine Lessons and Carols**
 Monday December 10 at 6pm.
All Welcome
 Refreshments follow

Advent Thoughts on Compassion

“for there is nothing heavier than compassion. Not even one's own pain weighs so heavy as the pain one feels with someone, for someone, a pain intensified by the imagination and prolonged by a hundred echoes.”

— Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

“Highly sensitive people are too often perceived as weaklings or damaged goods. To feel intensely is not a symptom of weakness, it is the trademark of the truly alive and compassionate. It is not the empath who is broken, it is society that has become dysfunctional and emotionally disabled. There is no shame in expressing your authentic feelings. Those who are at times described as being a 'hot mess' or having 'too many issues' are the very fabric of what keeps the dream alive for a more caring, humane world. Never be ashamed to let your tears shine a light in this world.”

— Anthon St. Maarten



**ANNUAL COLLECTION
 TODAY**

Please give generously in support of
 this parish-based world
THANK YOU



THANK YOU

For many very generous food donations last weekend. This will be much appreciated by Crosscare and the many people who will benefit from your generosity.

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm
 Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm
 Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only
 -Rosary daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

Church Collections

W/e 2nd December 2018
 1st Collection: €1,225
 Share Collection: €830
 Weekday collections: €350

THANK YOU

In Memoriam

Masses on 8th/9th December 2018

6pm: Annie Curran (Anniversary)

9.30am: John and Laura Cunningham
 Relations and Friends

11am: Kathleen and Ned Barrett (Anniv)

5pm Roseanna Kelly

Masses on 15th/16th December 2018

6pm: Patrick and Brigid Donoghue (Anniversary)

11am: Pat French (Anniversary)

5pm: Christopher Crean