

Inspiration for **Reconnecting with Compassion** Sept 3, 2023 Rev Brigid Beckman
(Begin with Loving Kindness Meditation)

Two weeks ago, my inspiration was the first chapter of the book my dear friend Sue sent me: ***The Rebirthing of God” Christianity’s Struggle for New Beginnings***

Author John Philip Newell walks readers along the pilgrimage journey on Iona, where I was so privileged to walk last month. As he stops at points along the way, we’re invited into our own deeper journey in the continuous rebirthing of the Divine. Today, I want to journey into what it means for us to be people of compassion.

Here again is the passage I read two weeks ago:

*What does it mean that we are made of God rather than simply by God? In part it means that the wisdom of God is deep within us, deeper than the ignorance of what we have done. It is to say that the creativity of God is deep within us, deeper than any barrenness in our lives or relationships, deeper than any endings in our families or our world...We **and all things** have come forth from the One.*

Chapter 2: Reconnecting with the Compassion

“...we pause at this intersection to ask what are the crossroads of our lives and our world today. In our individual lives, or as families and nations, as religious traditions and as a species, what are the critical junctures at which we stand? How do we know which way to turn?

*...In Proverbs 8:2, we hear that Lady Wisdom stands at the crossroads of life. One of her characteristics is compassion. At every moment in our lives and on every pathway in the world, do we know that we can access the gift of wisdom? It is deeper than our individual consciousness, deeper than rationality, deeper than our ego and **it leads us into the way of compassion...***

Point out compass clip art! :-D Etymology of compass and compassion...

[A mathematical compass] Is used to determine the relationship between two points. The related word compassion is about honoring the relationship between two people

or between one group and another, and remembering those who suffer. It is about making the connection between the heart of my being and the heart of yours, and following that connection... even when we are filled with doubts as to whether we are moving in the right direction.”

THREEFOLD PATH of COMPASSION:

The courage to see. The courage to feel. And the courage to act.

*“To live compassionately is to courageously **see** the connection between ourselves and those who suffer. Not only do we see the connection and become aware of it, but we allow ourselves to feel it. Finally, it is not just to see and feel the connection but to act on it, to courageously take responsibility for those who suffer...”*

The Courage to See:

We embrace the Divine Essence of ALL Beings...

Compassion is about SEEING that divine essence and “making the compass connection between ourselves and the other...”

“... compassion is essentially a benediction. Compassion can free us from the prison of the ego, whether our individual ego or that of our family, community or nation. To want to be responsible for the needs of others is a blessing. It frees us from our narrow self-interest. The great challenge is to see our connection with those who seem different from us– the nation that does not share our vision, the people whose lifestyle we cannot understand, the individuals or groups who threaten us...”

The Courage to Feel:

(the heart of the Buddhist Metta/Loving-Kindness meditation– we’ll come back to this!)

“How can we remain open to the flow of feeling that is an essential part of the pathway of compassion?... There is a direct relationship between allowing ourselves to truly feel and the decision to act. Compassionate action is sustained by the courage to feel.”

This deep connecting of our hearts to another's heart is where the blessing and benediction of compassion meet! How do we stay open to our own gates of sorrow, to those of our neighbors—and to the sorrows of the world— without becoming swept away? We need the anchors of our spiritual practices, and our Beloved Community— the Infinity loop of filling our well, bringing that compassion out into community and then being fed... again and again and again.

The Courage to Act:

“The challenge when it comes to compassionate action is that it is costly. Is that not why we so often shut down feelings of compassion and, even before that, refuse to see with compassion? one flows naturally into the other. if we allow ourselves to see, we will more readily feel, and if we open to the river of compassionate feeling, we will more likely act. but the call to action is usually the sticking point..

JP Newell tells a story originally from a Scottish Jesuit priest and author of God of surprises Gerard W Hughes. *It's the imaginary story of Jesus visiting a modern family. The family is absolutely thrilled to have Jesus in their home. They're so thrilled that they decide to throw a party to introduce him to their friends. They love showing off Jesus. The party is a great success; the problem comes however when Jesus decides to stay. In fact, he decides to move in! This is very different from throwing a party. Jesus begins to bring all sorts of questionable types from the city streets back to the house. a lot of food is being consumed. The neighbors are complaining about plunging property values. It is all becoming far too demanding for the family, but then one of them has a bright idea. When Jesus is having his afternoon siesta, they will brick up his bedroom door. Then they will place a little altar in front of it, with beautiful candlesticks and a silver crucifix, and every time they pass the bedroom they will genuflect. This is how to deal with Jesus!*

It can feel overwhelming to welcome in the “questionable types” of issues we see in our own families, in our city, in our country and around the world. But Jesus the Way-shower and so many other spiritual guides remind us that instead of feeling

paralyzed *we simply begin*. We feed the hungry. We forgive—ourselves and those who have hurt us. We act justly and with integrity in all of our actions, large and small.

We find our “inroad into tidying up one corner of the mess. There is a direct relationship between hope and action. Yes, hope will lead us to act in the first place but then action in turn, strengthens hope. When we act with compassion, even if we perform the simplest of compassionate deeds, we recognize that the unjust wrongs that create suffering in our world are not an indelible feature of reality. Each one of us has a crucial role to play in our families, our personal relationships, our religious communities. No one else can play that role of compassion for us. Do we know this, that each one of us is essential?”