

COMPASSION

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Spirituality Conference

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Opening Announcement and Welcoming:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others — even our enemies — is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion — to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate — to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures — to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity — to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings — even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

— Charter For Compassion

“Dear God, please remove the walls in front of my heart. May I see the gentleness in others, and may they see the gentleness in me. May Your tenderness be my strength and Your compassion be my guide. Amen.”

‘COMPASSION’ FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE:

The spiritual story of humanity is at least 70 000 years old. By comparison, the formal religions have existed for a mere 7000 years. Spirituality is, and perhaps always has been, more central to human experience than religion.

Drawing from the past on the canvas of modern findings of many disciplines, ‘A Contemporary Christian Spirituality’ could now set to explore this ‘NEW’ spiritual irruption, one that leaves religious dogma diminishing while millions throughout the world seek meaning and nourishment in a range of new contexts, many of which transcend, avoid and even abandon the religious certainty of bygone days.

Mense draai nie hul rug op KERK per se nie; ook nie téén GEORGANISEERDE GELOOF nie; nog minder is daar 'n ANTI-GOD sentiment (intendeel) ... maar eerder 'n gevoel dat ons dik geëet is aan die menu wat vir ons die laaste paar honderd jaar voorgesit is.

Niks fout met die menu nie — dis net 'n menu vir 'n ander tyd!!

Martin Luther sou met reg kon vra: *Waar vind ek 'n genadige God?* — maar dis nie meer die HEDENDAAGS MENS se vraag nie. Vandag wil mense weet: Is daar 'n God en as daar is, hoe moet ek dit ERVAAR & VERWOORD sodat dit 'n RELEVANTE INVLOED in my lewe het ...?

Father Roland's promise: ***Honour the Sacred Space of the Chapel, and when you stand underneath the cross, be gentle in your criticism about Christianity.***

Mankind of the 21st Century lives in a world so far removed from 100, 1000, 2000 years ago that there is almost no resemblance of the cultures that were the founding fathers and mothers of our Christian Tradition.

To understand the roots of Christianity we have to go to the roots of Judaism and to understand Judaism you have to have a very good knowledge and understanding of ancient cultures around the Mediterranean Sea, in particular the profound influence of the Phoenician, Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman Religions.

Judaism can be translated into *one* word — צדקה — righteousness – **to be what you ought to be!** For our Master, and Teacher, Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, this was the essence of his teaching — **the barrier-breaker who mingled and socialised with all the wrong people** in order to make it clear: *only in our humanity will we find our Divinity!*

GOD can and will not be defined by mythologies, rituals, or religion. That God has no FORM, DIMENSION, DEFINITION and is beyond **RELIGIO: bind, bond, obligation.**

As progressive Christians, joined by many scholars around the world,
this what we confess and believe ➔

♥ We believe in God, who is the very essence of LIFE, seen through LIGHT and experienced through LOVE.

♥ We believe in Jesus Christ, who has shown us the human face of God, and has become the VISION OF GOD who, through love refused to be limited, who calls us to a new life, a new consciousness, that even death cannot end.

♥ We believe in the Holy Spirit who is the VOICE FOR GOD, through whom God reaches us, surprising, prompting and questioning us; who is the LIVING breath of creation; and the SOURCE of fertility and fecundity.

♥ We believe in ourselves as people made in the divine image, capable of great courage and compassion, discovery and devotion. As ambassadors of the Great Divine we are ALL equal in the eyes of God and therefore called to be a reflection of the Life, Light, and Love of God as our Master and Teacher has set an example.

♥ We believe that Christ leads us now, calling us to a life that is absurd by the standards of the world; calling us to resist evil, including anything that would degrade or destroy another and to create and protect love, justice, freedom and peace.

“A God of Unconditional Love is utterly incomprehensible to a species that has still not learned to love itself enough to stop destroying itself”

— Neale Donald Walsch

✿ **Living God** — Ek is wat ek is, wie ek is, wat ek sal wees ... die Lig van Lewe

✿ **Holy God** — trek jou skoene uit want die grond waarop jy staan is heilig

✿ **Compassionate God** — met liefde en genade oorvol, oorloop, oorgenoeg

✿ **Present God** — nie 'n God van vêr is met witbroodjies nie maar teenwoordig

✿ **Relationship God** — wat mense gebruik in hulle verhouding met mekaar

To talk about COMPASSION and the God we confess to be our Life, Light and Love, is to **BE** a witness (μάρτυρας) and messenger (αγγελία) of a Life, Light, and Love of God in order to become the **AWARENESS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD!**

Become the Awareness of the Presence of God ➔ that's what Compassion is from a Christian Perspective —!!

- **Kindness:** celebration, charity, compassion
- **Compassion:** courage, connection, consideration
- **Consideration:** discipline, devotion, dedication
- **Dedication:** appreciation, thankfulness, gratitude
- **Gratitude:** atonement, grace, forgiveness

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful, compassionate people do not just happen.” — Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

This DAWN OF THE GREAT REBIRTH into a NEW AWARENESS; A MINDFULNESS of a radical awakening, appears in a number of shifts in understanding:

- ✓ The emergence of ecological awareness and sensitivity to the natural, organic world, with a **compassion** towards the fragility of planet Earth.
- ✓ A growing sense of **compassion** towards other species sharing our planet.
- ✓ A recognition of the interdependence within ALL our relationships based on a profound understanding and **compassion** of these fragile relationships.
- ✓ The abandoning of militant nationalism; religious fundamentalism and to demolish any form of violence as a means to solve conflict. (**Compassion**)
- ✓ A deep, evolving experience of community between and among the religions through their individual members in order for us to share our knowledge, understanding, experience, wisdom, and thriving in our sense of **compassion**
- ✓ A growing receptivity to the inner treasures of the world's religions in general and their spiritual and mystical background and influence in particular. In order for us to find our common ground in, and through, the *grace* of **compassion**
- ✓ A **love, acceptance, respect, dignity**, and **blessing** about life! An expanded consciousness in order for us as humans to cultivate and nurture a compassion of **consciousness, awareness, presence, awakening**, and **rebirth**.

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” (Colossians 2:12)

As **John of the Cross** so eloquently puts it: *“the soul is in itself the most lovely and perfect image of God. In order to reach the summit of this high mount, (the soul) must have changed its garments (resulting in) a new understanding of God in God, the old human understanding being cast aside; and a new love of God”*

Thomas Merton emphasizes this with: *“His presence is present in my own presence. If I am, then He is. And in knowing that I am, if I penetrate to the depths of my own existence and my own present reality, the indefinable is myself in its deepest roots, then through this deep centre I pass into the infinite I AM which is the very Name of the Almighty. — We find God in our own being which is the mirror of God”*

The Key to Compassion ➔ FORGIVENESS

“To forgive is not to forget, to forgive is to remember that nobody is perfect and that each of us stumbles when we want so much to stay upright. That each of us says things we wish we had never said. That we can all forget that love is more important than being right. To forgive is really to remember that we are so much more than our mistakes. That we are often more kind and caring and that accepting another’s flaws can help us accept our own. To forgive is to remember that the odds are pretty good that we might soon need to be forgiven ourselves. That life sometimes gives us more than we can handle gracefully. To forgive is to remember that we have room in our hearts to begin again and again, and again.”

[To forgive is to remember — Author known to God]

Ubuntu means Compassion

Christian Spirituality recognizes and celebrates that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning and purpose to our lives.

Die Ubuntu beginsel (that we are defined by our compassion and kindness towards others) is die grondreël van Jesus se lering. Dit behoort die credo van elke gesin en elke besigheid te wees want ook dít is die enigste waarde wat nie deur mot en rot opgevrete word nie.

Do you want peace in your life ➔ go, and practice forgiveness

Do you want love in your life ➔ go, and become to love you seek

Do you want happiness ➔ go, and share the joy that doesn’t depend on circumstances

Do you need empathy ➔ go, and demonstrate some compassion to others

... and our conclusion ...

🌸 Make grace, **compassion**, understanding, and love the hallmarks of your personality, as they are the essence of our true being.

🌿 Stand your ground and say, *“I stand for wisdom. I stand for integrity. I stand for honesty. I stand for **compassion**, I stand for forgiveness. I stand for beauty & love.”*

🌻 It is through allowing our own vulnerability that we invite those around us to love us, honour us, and recognize our oneness (**compassion**) with each other.

🌼 Miracles occur in response to **compassion** (faith, hope, love) — find the Holy Instant in every situation – and choose love over fear.

🌺 May we extend the **compassion** we wish to feel from others, to everyone we meet. May our eyes be opened to the truth beyond the veil.

☀️ May we actualize the Light within us. May we expand the boundaries of our capacity to love. May we be more forgiving, more merciful, more **compassionate**, and kinder.

🌻 God is closer to me than my breath. He is the light of **compassion** and the power of love. He is the truth of my being and the source of my strength.

Make this your daily MANTRA — (Neale Donald Walsch in CWG)

“I am goodness and mercy, compassion and understanding.

I am peace and joy and light.

I am forgiveness and patience,
strength and courage.

I am a helper in time of need,

I am a comforter in time of sorrow,

I am a healer in time of injury,

I am a teacher in times of confusion.

I am the deepest wisdom and the highest truth;

I am the greatest peace and the grandest love.

I am all these things.”

... Thank You ...

The Closing of the Conference

Lord, you have searched me and known me! //

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; //

you discern my thoughts, from afar. //

You search out my path, and my lying down. //

You are acquainted, with all my ways. /

Even before a word is on my tongue,

behold, O Lord, you know it ... altogether. //

You hem me in, behind / and before, / you lay your hand upon me. /

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; / it is high; / I cannot attain it. //

Where shall I go from your Spirit? / Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

even there your right hand shall lead me, and your hand shall hold me. //

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me, be night," /

even the darkness is not dark to you; / the night is bright as the day,

the darkness is as light with you. //

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's

womb. // I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. //

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth. //

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written every one

of them, the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them. //

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them! //

If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you.

— Psalm 139:1-18 (Ruth Fazal) —