



COMPASSION QUARTERLY

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

No. 18: DIVINE COMPASSION 2021

<https://compassionateheartsofjesusandmary.wordpress.com/>



I REALISE there was no 'Quarterly' for Easter and that this is the first edition this year. I offer my apologies but was immersed in finishing my third book for Canterbury Press: *WHAT DO YOU SEEK? Treasures of Religious Life*. It's due to be published by Canterbury Press in September and concerns – the Religious Life (specifically Anglican) – and how that life can help deepen and grow our own life in Christ.

Covid has occupied much of the world's attention, and it's been very noticeable how compassion has risen for both those suffering from the virus and those caring for sufferers. The way many have lost their jobs and poverty has increased has become obvious; the rise in numbers using foodbanks is a shocking result of this and – for people of my post-war boom generation – an almost unbelievable situation which the government seems unable (or unwilling) to solve. At the start of the 21st century no one in our advanced society should need to beg for food.

'I have many human faults and failures ... But God bends down and uses us, you and me, to be his love and his compassion in the world; he bears our sins, our troubles and our faults. He depends on us to love the world and to show how much he loves it. If we are too concerned with ourselves we will have no time left for others.' (St Teresa of Calcutta. Quoted from *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis, para. 107)

My own attention has increasingly been drawn by the Sacred Heart. In writing 'What Do You Seek' I was interested by the number of Anglican religious who

were similarly drawn – from Fr Benson SSJE to Fr William of Glasshampton SDC. The first Franciscan community for men in the Church of England was dedicated to the Divine Compassion. And that, of course, is just another way of speaking of the Sacred Heart. The Society of the Divine Compassion (SDC) was founded in 1894, five years after the Feast of the Sacred Heart had been made 'of obligation' in the Catholic Church and whilst the Basilica of the Sacred Heart (Sacré-Cœur) was being built in Paris. One of the three founder members of the Society, Fr. Andrew SDC, had a particular devotion to the Sacred Heart. As he wrote in one of his meditations:

To rest a tired head upon Thy Heart,
And to be still –
To come to Thee from the whole world apart
And learn Thy Will –
And in that will, because it is Thy will, to live and die,
Knowing Thy love and will are one eternally.
that be my way of prayer –
That brings me where Thou art –
Heaven is there.

He also wrote the hymn 'O dearest Lord thy sacred head, with thorns was pierced for me' which concludes with this verse:

O dearest Lord thy Sacred Heart
with spear was pierced for me;
O pour thy Spirit in my heart
That I may live for thee

The priest, poet, writer and missionary Fr. Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869-1952) known as the 'St Francis of the African Countryside' whose *Shrine* is located in Maronda Mashanu, Zimbabwe was deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart and wrote:

O Heart of Jesus, Sacred, Passionate,
Anguish it was, yet anguish that was bliss,
To love them heart to heart, each selfish heart,
To clasp them close, and pray in utter truth –
'Father, forgive, they know not what they do.'
One was the heart of him that ground the poor,
Poor weary heart, so blinded and misled!



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One was the heart of her that reeked in shame,
Poor weary heart, so blinded and misled!
One was my heart, that wasted half its years,
And knew so little how to use the rest
To God's sole glory, and the love of men,
Poor weary heart, so blinded and misled!

In this Month of the Sacred Heart, I do hope you will find ways of helping others know about this devotion.



Art: Old and New Worship or Transformation

(Adapted from Richard Rohr, The Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self, Jossey-Bass: 2013, 203-205)

Truly a sword is piercing my heart, the pain is so great. How could this be happening to my child, to my son? I remember when he was born. —Diana L. Hayes ^[1]

Even though I was raised a “good” Catholic, I was often puzzled by the frequent use of heart imagery among our saints and in our art. Paintings of the “Sacred Heart of Jesus” and the “Immaculate Heart of Mary” are known to Catholics worldwide; in these images, Jesus and Mary are always pointing to their hearts, which are ablaze.

I often wonder what people actually do with these images. Are they mere sentiment? Are they objects of worship or objects of transformation? Such images keep recurring only if they are speaking something important and good from the unconscious, maybe even something necessary for the soul's emergence. What might that be?

The lines above from Diana Hayes suggest an answer. Visual art speaks to us on a deeper level than our intellectual mind. Artists use color, form, line, and texture to bypass our normal defences, stirring emotions that transcend language, explanation, time, and space. The blazing heart of Mary is undeniably united with the heart of her son. Even if we feel distanced from the divine suffering of Jesus, who cannot draw near to the parent of a suffering child? Humans are made to feel empathy, but sometimes fear or self-interest blocks the flow of love in us. Art can help us reconnect with our humanness.

Many have described prayer as bringing our thinking down into our heart. Next time a resentment, negativity, or irritation comes into your mind, for example, and you want to play it out or attach to it, consciously move that thought or person into your heart space. Dualistic commentaries are almost entirely lodged in your head. But within the heart, it's much easier to surround thoughts and sensations with silence, with the warmth of your life-blood — which can feel like burning coals.

In this place it is almost impossible to judge, create story lines, or remain antagonistic. You are in a place that does not create or feed on contraries but is the natural organ of life, embodiment, and love. Love lives and thrives in the heart space. It has kept me from wanting to hurt people who have hurt me. It keeps me every day from obsessive, repetitive, or compulsive head games. It can make the difference between being happy or being miserable and negative.

Could this be what we are really doing when we say we are praying for someone? Yes, we are holding them in our heart space. Do it in an almost physical sense, and you will see how calmly and quickly it works. Now, the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart have been transferred to you. They are pointing for you to join them there. The “sacred heart” is then your heart too, a heart on fire with love and compassion for the world.

References:

[1] Diana L. Hayes, *No Crystal Stair: Womanist Spirituality* (Orbis Books: 2016), 59.



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'The central element in communion with God is the act of self-surrender. The symbol of my prayer this day is the open heart. It is most natural for me to think of prayer in terms of the open hand. My needs are so great and often so desperate that there seems to be naught besides my own urgency. I must open my heart to God. This will include my own deep urgencies and all the warp and woof of my desiring. These things, deep within, I must trust with the full awareness that more important even than self-realization is the true glorifying of God. Somehow I must make God central to me and in me, over and above the use to which I wish or need to put His energy and His power.

I surrender myself to God without any conditions or reservations. I shall not bargain with [God]. I shall not make my surrender piecemeal but I shall lay bare the very center of me, that all of my very being shall be charged with the creative energy of God. Little by little,

or vast area by vast area, my life must be transmuted in the life of God. As this happens, I come into the meaning of true freedom and the burdens that I seemed unable to bear are floated in the current of the life and love of God.' (Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart* (Beacon Press: 1953, 1981), 174–175)

'Therefore, the test of our union with God is our ability to love our enemies and those who spitefully use us, to have that compassion which is God's for man's rebellion. We are involved in the confusion, rebellion and sinfulness in order to be bond-slaves of his redemptive grace that we may be his witnesses in the warfare of the spiritual conflict, sustaining the tribulation of the world in the knowledge of the Lord's peace. That is reparation and that endurance is the overflow of a contemplative life.' (Fr. Gilbert Shaw, *The Ascent*, 1964)

This may be the final edition of *Compassion Quarterly*. It was started as a response to what seemed a hardening of the heart of many in our nation at the time of Brexit and it would help to know IF YOU STILL FIND THE 'QUARTERLY' OF ANY HELP OR INTEREST? Just drop me a line at: cchjm@outlook.com

THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

Concerned with faith formation this book is ideal for individuals or groups. Written for an 'average' reader it uses the Creed to explore the essentials including material on prayer, the sacraments, worship etc with a Foreword by the Bishop of Salisbury. Canterbury Press have produced a video: https://youtu.be/k114d_eVzPo

