

# COMPASSION AS A WAY OF LIFE

## THE BODY OF COMPASSION

- I pray to be the face of compassion—  
that those who come within my view  
find a cordial, kindly reception  
written upon my facial landscape.
- I pray to be the ears of compassion—  
that those who come filled with distress  
will experience my attentive presence,  
ready to listen without distraction.
- I pray to be the eyes of compassion—  
that those who lack society's support  
will receive my nonjudgmental gaze,  
a look of unbiased, heartfelt welcome.
- I pray to be the shoulders of compassion—  
that those who come laden with burdens  
will be able to set things down for a while,  
and have the load lightened when they leave.
- I pray to be the heart of compassion—  
that those who feel overwhelmed with suffering  
will sense my empathic response,  
one that forgoes a desire to fix the hurt.
- I pray to be the mouth of compassion—  
that those whose voice is not heard  
will be empowered and supported  
by my determined, vocal stand for justice.

I pray to be the hands of compassion—  
that those whose life could benefit  
from my presence and my actions  
will be assisted by the humble offering.

I pray to be the feet of compassion—  
that those who long for companionship  
will see that I walk beside them,  
joined in the strength of a common humanity.

I pray that the Light of compassion shining in my soul  
will recognize and receive the Light shining in others,  
that together we will care for creation with respect and  
have gratitude for all that exists.

# LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

*Beloved, let us love one another,  
because love is of God; everyone who loves  
is born of God and knows God. Whoever does  
not love does not know God, for God is love.*

—1 John 4:7

Sacred Heart, Love of all Loves,  
turn my hesitant heart toward the people  
I find difficult to welcome into my life,  
especially the obnoxious and arrogant,  
the know-it-alls and the have-to-be-rights.  
Restore my inner sight to see with your eyes  
the people who jolt my visible sensitivity  
by their appearance and jarring behavior.  
Forgive me for my emotional responses,  
and the negative, mental judgments  
that betray your expansive compassion.

Take my hand and accompany me  
when I encounter snarly, irritable, upset,  
and easily angered individuals.  
Do not allow me to respond in like manner.  
Fortify my kindness with your love  
when I am with do-gooders, the self-righteous,  
the envious, and the hypocritical.  
Regenerate my faith in the goodness of humanity

when I come across betrayers, liars, cheats,  
and the least-trusted.

God of Love, let me see myself honestly,  
not apart from those I want to shun,  
but as another human being among them.  
I, too, am in need of transformation.  
Love of all Loves, grant that I may grow  
in greater awareness of my own  
dislikeable traits and disturbing limitations.

May I love others as you love them.  
May I find solace in knowing  
all of us have a home in your heart,  
the Sacred Heart.  
May I remember that when I love others  
I am loving you.

## COMPETITION AND COMPARISON

*She remembered seeing everything in terms of who had less than she did and who had more, who was prettier, smarter, who had a better relationship (everyone, usually), who was getting promoted faster. . . . She was constantly trying to figure out how to do it better, how to get it right, and in doing so she had started to grind her teeth at night.*

—Ann Patchett, *Commonwealth*

Compassionate One,

When I think poorly of myself because I do not match cultural norms of how to speak, think, look, or act, lead me to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts I have been given. Draw me inward to my core goodness. I will sink into that cradle of kindness and gain strength from what has lasting value.

Disengage my strong connection to the “rush, push, and shove” approach to daily life. Release in me whatever craves to be the best, to rise to the top, to show off who I am and what I can do.

Hush the strong voice of insecurity that steals energy from my spirit. Calm the anxiety that aches to have the spiritual life of another. Lift the darkness from my inner

eye so that I see with gratitude how enriched I am in my relationship with you.

Motivate my actions with the purpose of being your voice, your hands, your heart. Instill a steady commitment to share my talents for the benefit of all beings, rather than for how much I will please others, meet their expectations, or merit their affirmation.

Rein in negative, judgmental thoughts that arise from comparing my beliefs and values to those I consider less than worthy. Open any part of my mind and heart that closes the door to respect for those with diverse opinions, theories, and guiding principles.

Teach me how to stand compassionately amid a society that evaluates and labels others as acceptable and unacceptable. Do not let me give in to an adult peer-pressure that would prevent my wholehearted kindness from being extended to others.

In all I am and all I do, keep me mindful that you are the source of my abilities. Humble any form of arrogance or power that leaps into my mindset and brings harm into the life of another person.

Keep circling my heart with your unconditional love until it releases any tendency to compare or compete. Guide my discernment so that I will recognize the subtle ways of wanting more than I need, and be aware when I am seeking superiority over others.

I thank you for all I have been given. I am satisfied with who I am and what I have.