

Compassion: The character of Jesus

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them and cured the sick.” Mt 14.13-21

This week I want to call your attention to just one word—Compassion as we reflect on the passage of St. Mathew

The Latin root of compassion literally means “to suffer with.” Compassion is the ability to feel along with another person, the willingness to sympathize with the pain of one’s fellow humans. More than that, compassion is the pity that stirs one to act in order to help those who suffer.

The Bible often tells us that God is compassionate, but in the person of Jesus it shows us. Jesus’ whole ministry could be summed up in this one word ‘compassion’. He felt compassion toward those who suffered physically. Listen to these excerpts from the gospels: “Moved with pity he stretched out his hand and touched him” (speaking of a leper, Mark 1:41). “Jesus in pity touched their eyes” (of two blind men outside Jericho, Matthew 20:34). “He had compassion on [the crowds] . . . and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). Jesus also felt compassion for people who were suffering emotional distress. At the gates of Nain Jesus saw a widow carrying her only son to bury him. “When the Lord saw her he had compassion for her” (Luke 7:13), and Jesus restored the woman’s son to life.

Jesus not only showed empathy, but most importantly it stirred him to act upon or we can say in other words “Jesus’ heart went out to them. Jesus’ compassion heals the leper, gives sight to the blind and raises the dead son. St. Eugene as a young priest appalled by the poor conditions of the church in southern France did have this same spirit of compassion towards the poor. His compelling love for Christ and compassion for the poor forced him to gather a small group of priests to serve the poor, marginalized and neglected in the society. His visit to the poor on the streets of Aix- en-Provence, caring for the sick, helping the poor widows, visit to the prisoners are explicit signs of his compassionate and tender heart.

As oblates, we are called to nurture this spirituality of compassion in our communities, missions, and in ministries. Like Jesus who not only fed the hungry crowd but also invited his disciples to take part in feeding them, we too, as oblates, have to invite others to be part of this spirituality of compassion and of our charism ‘preaching the good news to the poor.’ St. Eugene exemplifies what Pope Francis, describes in *“Evangelii Gaudium, (120) as missionary Disciples of Christ Jesus.*

Pope Francis said, “The Lord goes out to meet the needs of men and women and wants to make each one of us concretely share in his compassion,”. May the words of Pope Francis remind us that we need to go out “to the periphery” and find the most abandoned by our society, and like Jesus and his disciples make conscious efforts to concretely share in his compassion by our deeds.

Fr. Vijay Deivanayagam OMI
Vocation Team Contact - Central

Phone: (431) 373-6342

Email: vijayreia@gmail.com

