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1 John 4:7-21

Sacred Earth, Sacred Word "What Does Love Look Like?"

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"According to Merriam-Webster (which I used to think was one person's name, like one person wrote the dictionary)

Compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of other's distress together with a desire to alleviate it." In other words, to be aware of another's pain and suffering, and then acting to change and transform it.

In creation spirituality transformation is the goal, the fullest energies of the human/divine partnership showing itself as a combination of compassion and creativity. Compassion is the fulfillment of the spiritual journey, not personal salvation or the getting of an "I'm going heaven" card.

In creation spirituality justice and compassion go hand and hand, and they are both absolutely integral to the spiritual journey.

Scripture does not talk to us about just stirring up a feeling for someone else. Rather, what the Christian journey is really about is about becoming a new creation: each of us individually as well as collectively.

The Bible tells us we can become a new creation in Christ. In other words, through Christ (his teaching and his life) we can develop a new heart, a new consciousness and because of those two things we can create new social structures.

It stands to reason, that if we are to become a new self, we must let go of the old self. The new self lets go of dualism (that

feeling of separateness and the lack of realization of connection, interdependence, and Oneness).

In 2 Peter 3:13 we are told to look for the new heaven and the new earth where righteousness (right relationships) will be at home, where right relationships dwell.

The New Creation is an invitation to create a global civilization of love/justice and ecological harmony. And who is invited to create this new structure of love/justice and harmony? Who is called to this prophetic work – a select few? No, rather according to our tradition it is the work of us all. We are all called to a prophetic vocation – each and every one of us to be a prophet. Both the prophets Amos and Joel said that being a prophet is not the work of a few, but the work of all – via the power of the Spirit. Ordinary people are called to a prophetic vocation. We need not rely solely on our human power, but rather on the power of the Holy Spirit as well, who dwells within us. Prophetic inspiration is for the sake of a third party.

We are all called to a life of compassion. We read in Luke 6:36, “Be compassionate as your Creator is compassionate.” Compassion means interdependence and equality of being. As Gandhi said, “There is enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed.”

In compassion, peace and justice kiss. (Eckhart) The marriage of peace and justice, of rest and equality, of the pleasure of relationship and the righting of relationship – this is the work of the compassionate person.

Notice how a compassionate person needs to go beyond feelings. To merely have empathy (to notice another person’s pain) and not do anything about it amounts to nothing. It does

not bring about transformation. Empathy may be informative, if you dare feel another's pain, but in and of itself it is not transformative for you or the other person or group, if there is no action on that information, if you and I do nothing – it merely then amounts to nothing. Let me propose that empathy will no longer carry the day – given the state of our world – feelings are not enough. Compassion showing itself in justice is the only vehicle that will lead us to what the world needs now. It and it alone will be our salvation!

So, empathy alone can pose as compassion and that's a problem. Yet, I would be amiss, if I did not raise equally the problem of paralysis. I do, and so I imagine you do too, become paralyzed by all the people, places and issues that need compassion – not just empathy, but action. And in the throws of that enormity, I can become stuck. This is when we all must claim that God does not expect us to do it all. Though, God does expect us to do our part. And what is your and my part? Our part is the person or group, the place or issue that God put on your heart and places in your path. That is your part! That is where you need to be a compassionate person. That is where your compassion and justice need to kiss. That is where you are to act. That is where we are to be compassionate as God is compassionate. That is where you show God's love being perfected in you. Therefore, let us be compassionate and do the work of love and justice and without fear, for God promises perfect love casts out fear.