



**MERCY
GLOBAL
PRESENCE**

Reflective Prayer: Compassionate Heart

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Theme: Can you Hear the Heartbeat?



Context: Thirty years ago, Dave Andrews, a Christian community worker living in an inner Brisbane suburb, wrote a book entitled, *Can You Hear the Heartbeat?* It described how Jesus related to those who lived on the edge of society, the abused, the outcast, those considered to be unclean and unaccepted in their communities and encouraged readers to meet people where they were at in life. The essence of being a follower of Jesus is to live in sympathy with God, feeling the throb of God's heartbeat. Even in the midst of a pressing schedule Jesus would take time out to go into the mountains to pray- like a son laying his head on his father's heart to hear his heartbeat. The last supper account in John's gospel gives us a wonderful mystical image. The evangelist describes the beloved disciple as reclining on the breast of Jesus. What's contained in this image? A number of things: First, when you put your head upon someone else's chest, your ear is just above that person's heart and you are able to hear his or her heartbeat. Hence, in John's image, we see the beloved disciple with his ear on Jesus' heart, hearing Jesus' heartbeat, and from that perspective looking out into the world. This is John's ultimate image for discipleship: The ideal disciple is the one who is attuned to Christ's heartbeat and sees the world with that sound in his or her ear. (Ron Rollheiser OMI,2006)

Reflection

Can you hear the heartbeat? Those words resonate deep within. It's a question we all need to ask—and answer. How do you hear a heartbeat? How do we hear God's heartbeat? The image of the apostle John leaning on the breast of Jesus reminds us that we too are like the beloved disciple called to have our heads on Jesus' breast so as to hear his heartbeat and from there look out at the world. If I am to have a compassionate heart, I need to listen to the heart of those I meet, showing them God's unconditional love and acceptance. There are many examples in the Gospels of how Jesus listened to the deepest needs of those with whom he met. Henri Nouwen (1992) writes: "I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against his chest and listen, without interruption to the heartbeat of God. Then, and only then, can I say carefully and very gently what I hear."

Suggestions for Prayer:

Pray this prayer to contemplate the compassionate heart of God.

The Heart of Eternal Love

Heart of Love,
Source of all kindness,
Teacher of the ways of goodness,

you are hidden in the pockets of daily life,
waiting to be discovered.

Heart of Gladness,
Joy that sings in our souls,
the Dancer and the Dance,
you are Music radiating in our
cherished caches of consolation.

Heart of Compassion,
the Healing One weeping
for a world burdened and bent,
you are the heart we bring
to the wounded, worn and weary.

Heart of Comfort,
Sheltering Wings of love,
Refuge for sad and lonely ones,
you embrace all who bear loss,
gathering their tears with care.

Heart of Understanding,
One who gazes upon the imperfect,
the incomplete, the flawed, the weak,
you never stop extending mercy.

Heart of Generosity,
Abundance of insight and hope,
daily you offer us gifts of growth,
leading to continual transformation.

Heart of Deepest Peace,
Centre of tranquility,
Resting Place at the core of our being,
you are waiting always for our return
to this sacred home. (*Out of the Ordinary*, Joyce Rupp)

Reflectively Watch this Video:

You, the Christ, Ian Callanan, Shirley Erena (Carmelite Monastery of Baltimore) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HylHAcKhsD4>

Words of the Song on the video:

You the Christ

*Stranger standing at my door,
You disturb me in the night.
You have needs I can't ignore.
You have eyes that speak your plight.*

*Do I know you nameless face?
Do I know you nameless face?*

*Battered woman, detainee.
Hungry youth or sickness case
Jobless parent, refugee
Do I know you nameless face?*

*You are strange in speech and dress
You have children at your side.
You are not like one of us-
You have begged away your pride.
If you passed across my screen
I might switch you out of sight.
Worlds away you might have been
yet you stand here in the night.
Do I know you nameless face?*

*I am fearful of your claim
Yet I cannot turn away.
Stranger with the foreign name.
Are you angel come to stay?*

*You are messenger and guest
You, the Christ I can't ignore
You, my own compassion's test
Stranger standing at my door
You, the Christ I can't ignore
You, the Christ I can't ignore*

(Stranger Standing at my Door: Shirley Erena Murray, 1997, Hope Publishing Company Carol Stream, IL 60188)

Conclude with the following prayer:

Compassionate God Your love invites all of us who live on this planet. We are truly brother and sisters joined in spirit through your abiding presence. Gather to your heart all the people who live in similar situations to those in this video. Enfold all those on the edge of society in your heart of compassion. Guide me to find and enter into actions that will help relieve the burdens of those who are oppressed. Thank you for the immensity of your love.

Blessing:

May we live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, generous in love (John O'Donohue)

Suggested Song/Video Monica Brown Comfort my People. [\(7\) Comfort My People - Monica Brown - YouTube](#)

References

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The Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri Nouwen, 1992

Ronrolheiser.com/listening to Christ's heartbeat, 2006.