

Compassion in Action  
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We remember the losses that resulted from the 2001 September 11 events, pray for those who suffered from the events and the consequences of those events. We honor all who have worked hard for our world to recover from those losses -- lost lives, lost family members, lost safety, lost freedom.

In addition to remembering and honoring those people, we gather today with people of all faiths in this garden. We gather to learn more about compassion and how we put this form of love in action.

Compassion is the form of love that allows us to feel for another person, to suffer with them, to become love for them.

The core of each of our beings is love. At the center of each person gathered here, our true nature is love. God who is love created us in God's own image and love is our true self. Every response and every behavior that comes out of us that is not love is coming from a false or wounded self.

We are here to remember that we are love. We are here to help others see that their true nature is love.

We have many emotional responses to life that are not love – fear of others, judgment of others, wanting power over others. Those fears and judgments are not who we are at our essence.

This is our work.

It is not about how quickly nor how perfectly we are able to love each person. It is that we know what the goal is and that we are on the road to learn more and more about being love. When we get away from that road we return to it as soon as possible. We return again and again to the path of learning who we are. In each of the world's religions there are provisions for personal purification. In this process we learn that inside each of us we carry a wounded child. Regardless of our spiritual path, part of our humanity is that no child-however loved they maybe be-reaches maturity without some wounding. To cope with that wounding we develop beliefs, masks, and behaviors that hide our core essence as God's child. Our untrue beliefs – masks – and self protective habits shut down our compassion.

This process of self purification and transformation of our lower self is ongoing. Just when we think we are internally all cleaned up, we meet another person that we cannot love, another person that we fear or judge. That fear or judgment is our cue to go back inside, with God's help, to untangle the complex threads that tie us to our wounded past. This inner housecleaning results in a healing that releases increased joy and increased compassion.

Silence/meditation/therapy/prayer/self observation all boost the cleaning through ongoing spiritual practices.

Let's clean it up—Let's allow God to heal and clean old wounds.

In addition to personal cleaning, each of our religious groups is vulnerable to their need for cleaning. It is not that there is anything wrong with the religions – nor their founders-it is that there are dark forces that seek to go into each of the world religions and co-opt a section of the religion for purposes of evil.

Evil would like for the religions to hate and fear one another. For all of us who are here, it is our job to be aware of any part of our own religion that might be co-opted by darkness. It is our job to influence our own religious communities to confront themselves about blind spots and fears.

In my faith of Christianity- some, not most, but some-Christians believe that God only works through the Christian religion. Evil loves that mistaken belief and seeks to gain a foothold of fear through that incorrect perception. It is my job and the job of other Christians to correct our own religion...to do this with love and leadership.

In addition to the cleansing that is personal and the cleaning that is broader, we have two more opportunities to grow in God's love.

First – in the midst of doing interfaith work – we are to deepen our own spiritual growth in our particular specific religion. As Sophia Said practices Dhikr, as Leslie Singer does community service in the spirit of the Jewish faith, as Anna Cox meditates with Buddha on her heart, as Siva Soora attends bajans (hymn singing) with the Hundus, as I pray to Christ and ask him to cleanse me, as we each commit to the particulars of our faiths we grow in love and we grow in less fear of other religions.

In my faith, I turn to Christ to show me how to love all people – challenging friends, challenging family, even the Egyptian who masterminded the 9-11 attacks – not to condone behavior but to love. Christ for me is the example and a living presence near me assisting me during prayer to grow in love.

Finally, in addition to deeper commitment to our own religion, love is increased by getting to know the people of other faiths. We do this not simply to develop “tolerance” which seems cold. We do this because God is actively working within the other. When we draw near the other, we draw near God. We are transformed both by love and we are often positively affected by spiritual teachings other than our own.

For example, my own faith has deepened as I have gotten to know my new Muslim friend, Sophia said, when she talks about her relationship with her spiritual teacher and her spiritual practice of Dhikr, a sacred Muslim form of meditation. It is clear to me when Sophia and I are discussing these matters how alive God is in her life and how near she is to God's active transforming presence. God's presence is palpable as she talks.

Let us be the ones. Let us lead the way. First, allow God to keep healing your wounded child so you can shine with more love and joy—your natural inheritance. Second, look for ways that your religion might be distorted for purposes of fear. Third, deepen the spiritual practices of your own faith tradition. Fourth, love and get to know people of other religions and allow yourself to learn about God's love through them.

In conclusion, a reading from the Christian New Testament: “if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with Good.” Amen