

Chilcote, E. (2005) *Changed from glory into glory*. Upper Room Books: Nashville.

What insight does Jesus' cross and his invitation to a cruciform life provide concerning prayer? How do these central affirmations of the Christian faith mobilize us for action? Earlier we explored the notion that intercession is not *our words*; intercession is *ourselves*. Prayer as solidarity in suffering involves compassion and hospitality. These manifestations of our intercession in and for the world are both dispositions and actions.

Compassion

God in Christ "suffers with" the world. This is the actual meaning of the word *compassion*. I believe nothing expresses the central truth of God's essence more fully than compassion, the outworking of God's self-giving love. We see compassion in the cross. Compassion, as one has written, is "the fertile suffering of love that births a new creation."

Certainly none of Jesus' stories proclaimed this imperative more directly than his parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). The parable actually begins with the lawyer's question of the Master, "And who is my neighbor?" The question places the lawyer in the center of his world. It asks of Jesus, "Who around me is worthy of my concern?" This self-centered posture triggers Jesus' response in the form of the story. We know it well. As others pass by, only the Samaritan, the despised and suspected outsider, has compassion on his wounded neighbor. The sting of the parable comes in Jesus' reversal of the original question. "Which of these three," Jesus asks, "do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

You see, Jesus teaches us not to define ourselves on the basis of where *we* stand but to redefine who we are by our action, by our relationship to those who surround us in life. "Demonstrate through your life," he says in essence, "what a true neighbor should be like. Have compassion. 'Suffer with' those who lie wounded around you." My friend and spiritual guide Brother Mark titled a chapter in his book *Love and Life's Journey* "Praying with Eyes Open to the World." If we pray in this posture through our action, we practice compassion.

Hospitality

The other active manifestation of prayer as solidarity in suffering is hospitality. Hospitality concretely expresses the love that binds us to Christ and to one another within the human family. It is a profound response to the crucified One who takes in the whole world by his wide embrace upon the cross. Listening and hospitality share much in common. Both are dispositions, what I have called postures, in life. A poignant statement from *Gleanings*, a significant volume among the writings of Douglas Steere, links these two aspects of our spiritual lives closely: "To 'listen' another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another."

Hospitality creates an opportunity for the one who has no voice to speak. It offers space to another person. It provides a safe place to be honest and real and wounded. It acknowledges the presence of the invisible person. Hospitality breaks down the barriers that separate us from one another. It embraces and welcomes the forgotten, the lonely, and the lost. It opens a way for the wounded to be healed. This prayer of hospitality is challenging because it "listens" another soul into love.