

Compassion and hospitality

Christfulness communion Service with HKCNP

Bible readings

Hebrews 13:1-3

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Matthew 25:37-40

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Reflection

We use the term Christfulness for describing the purpose and aim for God creating humans in the image and likeness of God. This means that we are created to grow and to become like Jesus in his relationship with God – his and our Father – and in his relationship to others. Our relationship with one another should reflect our relationship to God. God’s fullness of grace and truth, love, justice, compassion, peace is revealed in Jesus Christ, and he in turn shares God’s fullness with the church, the fellowship of believers that is Christ’s body. As believers we are called to have Christ’s fullness as our measure; it is the measure of maturity – as St. should]Paul states in Ephesians 4:12-13: “the body of Christ [should] be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

This growth is individual as well as corporate. It could be said to follow four phases:

- The experience of Christ with me
- The experience of Christ in me
- The experience of Christ in you
- The individual and corporate experience of being in Christ; together in Christ

When we speak of *Christ in me*, we are speaking of the human person as created in God's image. We speak our original human nature, which has been damaged, but which is restored to us in Christ. When we speak of *Christ with me* this means that human nature is not understood solely from ourselves, but from our relationship to Jesus Christ, and when we speak of *Christ-in-you* this means that human nature is developed in relation to other persons and that we meet others in welcoming and non-judgmental way as brothers and sisters. *Together in Christ* suggests that the fulfilled human nature is found in the fellowship of men and women as one redeemed humankind which is the body of Christ.

When we today focus on compassion and hospitality, we primarily consider the *Christ-in-you*-aspect of Christfulness.

When I experience Christ in me, I realize the reality, that every human being is created in the image of God. This realization means that we also begin seeing our fellow humans and fellow creatures with new eyes. Christfulness leads to awareness and an attentive or heedful presence in the world and among people. We begin looking for the image of God in the other person. And we begin seeing others with the eyes and heart of Jesus, because Christ is God's image in our heart.

The Christ-in-you experience is the reason for a non-judgmental attitude towards others and the environment. Jesus wants us to see the other person as a child of God, and he wants us to see the potential disciple in him/her. Therefore Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

That's why diaconia is the main faith practice of the Christ-in-you aspect of CFN. We are inspired by Jesus's way of meeting others. Jesus was compassionate, and it was compassion that from the very beginning motivated the Son of God to incarnate as one of us and become the son of man. Compassion

literally means suffering with another, sharing the other's suffering, taking part in it, engaging in it. God's Son could not bear to witness our estrangement from God and God's plan for human life, that we due to sin made others the victims of our own desires for success. We were subject to abuse, oppression, sickness, disease, poverty, hunger, and death. God's Son loved humans and was seeing that his image was hidden away and forgotten by humans. God's Son became a human person to restore God's image and raise humans to their dignity as God's sons and daughters.

He set us free to be what we were created for, and he fills us with his compassion. If we truly experience his love and return his love this should be reflected in loving others and seeing God's image in them, we love Christ in them and will guard their dignity as God's beloved children.

Compassion means a willingness to lay aside personal comfort to meet the one in need, meet him or her as a brother or sister. Compassion is not just a feeling or mood, or a state of mind. Compassion involves action. You cannot be compassionate without being present to the other in full awareness. There should be no judging others or liking other based on position, status, life circumstances, race, or gender. One expression of this is hospitality. According to Luke Jesus tells a pharisee by whom he was a guest not to invite friends, relatives or rich neighbors, but the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind that cannot repay the hospitality (14:12-14), and in the parable of the great banquet that follows the master tells his servants to go out into the streets and alleys and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame (14:15-24).

We end this service with the Holy Communion. In the Eucharist we give God thanks for the gifts of creation and for salvation, and we pray for the surrounding world. Christ takes bread and wine and compassionately offers himself to us saying, "this is my body and blood". But we can only receive what he offers if we are like him, i.e., in sharing with each other. We must give and share to receive. Thus, holy communion is the sign of compassion and hospitality.

A guided meditation

We will now enter a period of meditation.

If it is right to you, you may close your eyes.

Sit comfortably. Feel your body's contact with the floor and the chair back. Let your feet rest on the floor if possible - imagine they have roots, going deep into the ground. Relax your shoulders - your jaw - let your face relax. Sense your breathing - don't change it - just relax in it - feel Gods' presence. When you breathe out, release the tension and restlessness. If possible rest in your heart.

Come, Holy Spirit... Reveal the love that flows from God and from the heart of Jesus to my friend.

Help my friend to open the heart for your flow of love

And as my friend now receives your love, I pray: Come, Holy Spirit... Speak to my friend in the heart... and tell my friend:

"You are my child... I love you above everything in the entire world. None of the riches of the world mean more to me than you, my child,, I remind you of my joy because you are who you are..."

Let the words do their work in you while we sit together in silence for some time...

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I thank you, Holy Spirit, that my friend will rest in a whole and healed heart... with the knowledge of being loved, of being a child of God and of being appreciated.

Knowing that you are a child of God, beloved and appreciated try now in your mind or heart to reach out to a person you have met who suffer or a person whom you find it difficult to love or respect or who have been ungracious or hateful to you.

Come Holy Spirit and help my friend to be who my friend is in relation to that person, help my friend seeing Christ in that person

Let the Holy Spirit do his work in you...

You may try to imagine how you may be hospitable to that person, invite him or her into fellowship with you or imagine how compassion may become real, tangible and concrete

Jesus Christ. Thank you for your compassion and hospitality that you invited us to share your relationship with our heavenly Father, thank you that you invite us to share your love for us with those around us. Help us being faithful to your calling as we live as your brothers and sisters, God's children, beloved and appreciated.

The meditation is about to end. You may open your eyes when you are ready, and it is good to stretch your limbs to be fully present here and now.

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