

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 9th 2016

A few weeks ago I was enjoying baking cookies with my four year old grandson. He alternated between helping me and playing with his toys. I left one tray of cookies in the oven too long and when I took them out they were definitely over-baked. (That's a polite way of saying the cookies had burned.) I muttered something to him along the lines of, Oh dear. I made a big mistake and left the cookies in the oven too long. How could I be so careless? My grandson looked up with love and an authentically concerned expression on his face and said Mimi, it will be okay. Believe in yourself.

I gave him a big hug and told him that his loving words had instantly helped me to feel better! He smiled and went back to playing his game. His innocent, spontaneous compassion was so natural and genuine that it completely wiped away my moment of frustration. I was amazed that those comforting words had come out of the mouth of a four year old!

The experience with my grandson is a small example of the enormity of the impact that compassion has on another person. One of my deepest convictions is that the world needs more compassion. It is through compassionate outreach to others and being open to the compassion that others extend to us, that we will often find God.

In today's Gospel Jesus is compassionately preparing his Disciples for the day when he will no longer be with them: "Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

Jesus assures them that they will find peace because of the relationship they have had with him. He reminds them that the world is not easy but his compassionate words offer them great hope.

Compassion is an incredible, human action that God has given to us which is unlike sympathy, pity or "feeling sorry" for someone. Compassion comes from the heart. When we are touched by another's compassion, we often see the face of God.

The word compassion in both Hebrew and Greek means a deep, internal movement or response similar to giving birth. Those of us who have given birth have experienced the powerful force of labor and

delivery. Compassion is also a powerful force and a movement from within which extends toward the pain of another person. If we feel authentic compassion for another we cannot stop ourselves from moving toward them to alleviate their pain.

Father James Keenan in the book *Commandments of Compassion* writes about compassion and mercy and describes them as acts "...of God saving us and we are called to imitate God in God's own act of rescue. By rescuing others we participate in God's life." 1 When we rescue or are rescued by others, we know that we have encountered God.

In my own life, I have been touched by the care and compassion of others over and over again. In my ministry and through my personal relationships, I have been moved with compassion when walking with people through loss and/or pain. Over and over I have seen the face of God.

My little grandson rescued me from a frustrating moment when his compassionate, innocent response flooded my heart with gratitude. Likewise, Jesus cared for his disciples with compassion and care. I believe that Jesus was saying the same loving thing to each Disciple that my grandson said to me: It will be okay. Believe in yourself.

May each of us believe in ourselves and God's love this day.

Susan Naatz-Creighton University's Ministry