

Prayer

S E R V I C E



A COMPASSIONATE HEART

CALL TO PRAYER

LEADER Blessed be the Father of compassion and the God of all encouragement.

ALL Loving God, we meet to enrich our understanding of the call to serve in your healing ministry. Strengthen our faith, hope, and love through our meeting today and the sharing of thoughts and prayers. Take care of us, your ministers, and all who face the threat of illness and pain. We pray in faith. Amen.

READING

God's Heart

It is very important to realize that compassion is more than sympathy or empathy. When we are asked to listen to the pains of people and empathize with their suffering, we soon reach our emotional limits. We can listen only for a short time and only to a few people. In our society we are bombarded with so much "news" about human misery that our hearts easily get numbed simply because of overload. But God's compassionate heart does not have limits. God's heart is greater, infinitely greater, than the human heart. It is that divine heart that God wants to give to us so that we can love all people without burning out or becoming numb. It is for this compassionate heart that we pray when we say: "A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit" (Ps 51). The Holy Spirit of God is given to us so that we can become participants in God's compassion and so reach out to all people at all times with God's heart.

(from *Here and Now* by Henri Nouwen, Crossroad, 1994, pp. 109-110)

REFLECTION What does it mean to live in the world with a truly compassionate heart, a heart that remains open to all people at all times? Who are the people we need to reach out to in this organization/community? What will we do?

RITUAL In a basket, place the names of those for whom you wish to pray.

RESPONSE "We pray in faith, O God"

- For those in the healing ministry, that we may serve others with a compassionate heart (response)
- That local, state, and national officials may always cooperate to improve health care for all people (response)
- For the sick and dying, the imprisoned, and those suffering any need, that health care workers may show them Christian compassion and concern (response)

CLOSING PRAYER

God of goodness and love, hear our prayers for a compassionate heart as we remember the sick members of our community and those who care for them. As we celebrate World Day of the Sick we pledge our renewed commitment to the healing ministry. Hold us in your tenderness and bid us do the same for one another. Make us a compassionate healer, like your Son Jesus. Amen.

SUGGESTIONS

Some soft, instrumental music could be played during the reflection and ritual writing of names for the basket.

This prayer service focuses on compassion and could be used for World Day of the Sick, celebrated by the church in February. Feel free to adapt the service to suit your own needs.

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