



Fourth Sunday of Easter April 17, 2016 C

◆ Jesus—our Good and Compassionate Shepherd

◆ Seven habits of highly compassionate people

Traditionally, the Fourth Sunday of Easter has been called *Good Shepherd Sunday* because the Gospel is always an excerpt from John 10 in which Jesus speaks of himself as a Good Shepherd.

We priests are called to be good Shepherds to our people. We might say all of us in leadership positions are called to be good Shepherds to the people we lead and serve.

I am very grateful to all of you who tell me that you pray for me often if not daily. That is a great act of love. We imperfect servants of the Lord need a lot of prayers. I especially ask you to pray that I be *attentive* and *responsive* to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The more I am, the better priest I will be.

Also pray for me (and Fr. BK and our deacons) as we prepare our homilies, that we *hear* and *follow* the direction of the Holy Spirit. Finally, pray that I be attentive and responsive to the Holy Spirit when it comes to use of *time*. As you all know, time is a very precious gift. I often wonder what is the best use of time. When it comes to time, we (or at least I) need to be flexible. We may have plans for our day, but then God throws a wrench in our plans and calls us to use our time in another way.

YEAR OF MERCY

Seven habits of highly compassionate people

The following article is by Rev. Victor Parachin. His articles are always reflective and concrete. This one is no exception.

Bud Caldwell was happily married for nearly 56 years when his beloved wife died. After her death, he bought, donated and dedicated a bench in his wife's memory. That bench was placed in a park in their hometown of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Every day—rain or sunshine—Mr. Caldwell visits that bench. There he talks with his wife, Betty, about what's been going on in his life, and then he leaves a penny and a daisy on the bench. Those two mementos are left as a tribute and memory of their two favorite songs—"Pennies From Heaven" and "Daisy A Day."

Recently, when a heavy winter snowstorm hit the area, Mr. Caldwell made the drive to the park but the snow was so deep he didn't want to risk injuring himself by walking to the bench. So, he sat in his car and thought about Betty, the love of his life.

Two Fond du Lac park employees, who knew his routine, saw him sitting in the car and immediately got out shovels and cleared the walk for Mr. Caldwell. "We have to make sure he can get to his bench and talk to his wife," one of the employees explained as he vowed to keep the path clear all winter. Mr. Caldwell says that as long as he can, he will continue to visit the bench daily, leaving his wife a daisy and a penny.

This is a true story about the power of compassion. It is an act which directly benefits the recipient, allows the givers of compassion to express their noble side and always makes the world a more gentle place.

That's one reason why the biblical writers instruct people of faith to practice compassion. "Be kind and compassionate to one another" (Eph 4:32). "Be compassionate and humble" (1 Pt 3:8). Compassion was something commonly practiced by Jesus—"He had compassion on them" (Mt 9:36); "He was filled with compassion for them" (Lk 15:20); "I have compassion for these people" (Mt 15:32).

Though it seems that the world is filled with cruelty and unkindness, there are many, many exceptions. All over the planet and in every community, there are countless women and men who daily live out kindness and compassion. You can be one of them. Here are the seven habits of highly compassionate people.

1. **Highly compassionate people take action.**

Sometimes it's a lot, sometimes it's a little. Either way, whenever they see a need, they respond doing whatever they can. They don't turn away. Abraham Lincoln was well known and, consequently, highly respected for his compassion. As the Civil War raged on, he was besieged with requests for pardons from young men who were sentenced to death for desertion. Such appeals were accompanied by several testimonial letters from family, friends and leading figures.

One day Lincoln received an appeal for a pardon that was unusual in that it arrived without a single letter of support for the prisoner. Surprised by this, Lincoln investigated and tracked down an officer who knew the man and his situation. The officer explained to Lincoln

that this soldier did not have a single friend and that his entire family had been killed in the war.

Lincoln wrestled all night with his decision. He knew that pardoning the man would bring him the wrath of his generals who felt it would send the wrong message to the troops and would undermine military discipline. By morning Lincoln's decision was made. He asked that a letter of pardon be drafted, telling his aides that the testimony of a friend helped Lincoln issue the pardon. When the president was reminded that the request came with no supportive correspondence from any friend, Lincoln said: "I will be his friend." He then signed the letter of pardon.

2. Highly compassionate people operate on the commonality principle.

"The major block to compassion is the judgment in our minds. Judgment is the mind's primary tool of separation," observes Rev. Diane Berke. That may be one reason why Jesus commanded: "Do not judge" (Mt 7:1). Rather than see differences and distinctions between themselves and others, the highly compassionate recognize commonality and unity. They do not judge. Rather, they understand that the bottom line is this: we're all the same and want the same basic things in life.

To deepen your compassion, banish artificial separation between "us and them." Do this by repeating these affirmations. Intentionally direct them toward family, friends, acquaintances, strangers and especially those individuals you find annoying and irritating.

Just like me, this person is seeking happiness.

Just like me, this person wants a meaningful life.

Just like me, this person seeks to avoid suffering.

Just like me, this person wants to be accepted and loved.

Just like me, this person is trying to learn and grow in life.

Just like me, this person experiences sadness, wounds and loneliness.

3. Highly compassionate people are ordinary individuals who do extraordinary things.

Recently, the family of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy who was killed by Israeli soldiers donated one of his kidneys to an Israeli youth. "It doesn't matter whether the recipient was a Jew or an Arab," they said. Their son, Ahmed Khatib was shot on the West Bank and rushed to an emergency room in Haifa. He died without recovering consciousness. The army said Ahmed had a toy gun, which soldiers mistook for a rifle. Ahmed's family, moved by compassion, agreed to the donation after they saw the young Israeli kidney patient.

4. Highly compassionate people care.

It's as simple as that. They care about others. Whether they know them or not is incidental. They help out in any way they can. Just such compassion may have been in the mind of poet William Blake when he penned these words: "Can I see another's woe, and not be in sorrow too? Can I see another's grief, and not seek for kind relief?"

This type of compassion was experienced several times by Patti Candelari. Her wallet was stolen while on a business trip, something she discovered during a layover at the Detroit airport on her way home to New York. Hungry, she explained her situation and asked the restaurant manager for a meal. He gave her a free lunch.

Upon arriving in New York City she realized she did not have the \$20 for airport parking. As she pleaded her case with the lot attendant, cars were lining up behind her. Then the man in the vehicle directly behind hers got out, walked to the toll collector and paid for her. "I got his address and later mailed him a check." Finally on the New York Thruway, the toll collector waved her through after she explained her circumstances. "Three different people helped me make my way home!"

5. Highly compassionate people often act anonymously.

They do their good deeds in secret, behind the scenes, avoiding recognition and praise. This kind of compassion was encouraged by Jesus: "Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding. When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself.... When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively" (Mt 6:1-4, The Message Bible).

A woman tells of a time when she and her 5-year-old daughter were sledding in Vermont near their home. "I was watching her coast down the hill when she suddenly disappeared. She'd slid into a snow-covered hole—not much bigger than she was—created by construction going on nearby." The mother could not reach down far enough to get to her and was too frightened to leave her alone in the dark, snow-filled hole.

She tried screaming for her family but no one heard. She was panicking when a man, walking his dog in the snow, heard and ran over. He held the mother by her ankles so she could slide into the hole and pull her daughter out. He walked them both back to her house. By the time the mother had calmed down enough to thank him, he was already gone.

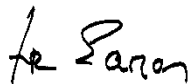
6. Highly compassionate people know it is an unending activity.

There is no time and no place when compassion ceases. They view it as an unending, lifelong obligation. Consider this example of Rabbi Israel Salanter, a leading 19th century European Jewish leader. In the last year of his life he became ill so the Jewish community hired a caregiver to be with him at all times. The caregiver was a kind man without any formal education. Late one night, when Rabbi Salanter felt his death was imminent, he spent his final moments reassuring the caretaker that he should not be frightened or be nervous about being alone in a room with a corpse.

7. Highly compassionate people engage in random acts of compassion routinely.

They would understand and agree with this advice from journalist Oliver Thomas: "Don't just walk by the homeless person. Take her to lunch. Give your coat to the man standing on the windy street corner in a threadbare jacket. You've probably got more at home. Throw a twenty in the Salvation Army's pot when you're shopping. Just start doing kind things for others. Compassion must be practiced and here's the thing: Behavior begets habit. Habit begets character. Next thing you know, you've become a compassionate person."

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Le Saron". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.