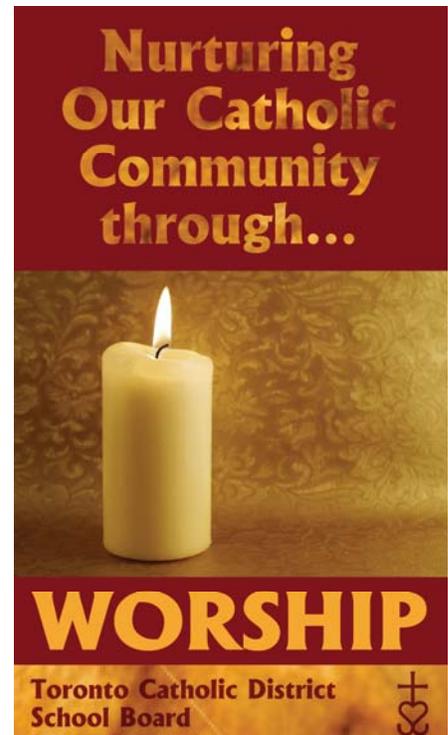


## Discussion Starters/ Reflection Ideas/ Activities

- Identify an area where you need to be compassionate to yourself. Write about how you will go about this.
- Tell a story about a moral mentor you have known- someone who inspired you with his or her compassionate activity.
- Volunteer to serve meals at a soup kitchen, to carry meals to shut-ins, to read to people in the hospital or in a senior's residence, or to do any other activity that puts you close to suffering.
- Go on a fast. If you are inexperienced in this practice, begin with a one-day fast. Eat only fruits or vegetables and drink at least eight glasses of water. Or skip a meal a day for one week. Use the time you would have spent preparing and eating food for quiet reflection on the experience of being hungry. Feel compassion for the millions of people around the world who do not have enough to eat.
  - Create a Compassion Collage. Gather pictures of people, places, and things for which you feel compassion. You may take photos yourself, cut them out of magazines and newspapers, copy them from books, or find them in the direct mail appeals from service organizations. Look for strong pictures to which you have an emotional response, no matter how painful. Include examples of the suffering of animals, nature, and things. Add words or symbols to represent others areas of concern.



- Try to eat “mindfully” in order to nourish compassion and think about ways that you can help those who are hungry and lonely in your own community. Take a moment to imagine the thousands children who are suffering or who die every day because of the lack of food. Think of the many people who are lonely, without friends or family. Visualize them and feel deep compassion.
- The next time you are waiting in line at a bank, at the supermarket, in a clothing store, in traffic, or on a busy, crowded bus— silently offer a blessing for the others around you. Consider each blessing a secret sanctuary offered to a hurried and unsuspecting world. Each person has their own “story”---we never know what they might be dealing with to explain their haste or mood at that moment.
- Prayer:

Dear God,

As you draw me ever deeper into your heart,

I discover that my companions on the journey

are women and men loved by you as fully and as intimately as I am.

In your compassionate heart,

there is a place for all of them.

No one is excluded.

Give me a share in your compassion, dear God

so that your unlimited love may become visible

in the way I love my brothers and sisters.

Amen.      **Source** Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*

- Imagery Exercise:

The following exercise uses a method described in *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola*.

Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan— Luke 10: 29-37. Imagine yourself in the scene of the story on the road to Jericho. Be one of the people in the story: the man beaten and

robbed by thieves, the priest who passes by, the Levite who walks away, the Samaritan who tends to his wounds, the innkeeper who cares for him. You also may choose to remain an observer of these events. Notice your location and how you are feeling. Replay the sequence of events in the story, staying with any parts of it that touch you. Being there now in the story, what do you say? What do you do? How do you feel about what is happening? End this exercise with a prayer of gratitude for this experience of compassion.