

Resources: Print and Film

Literature Resources and Excerpts on the Virtue of Compassion

- *The Selfless Way of Christ
Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life*
Henri J. M. Nouwen
Orbis Books 03/07
ISBN: 10157075702X

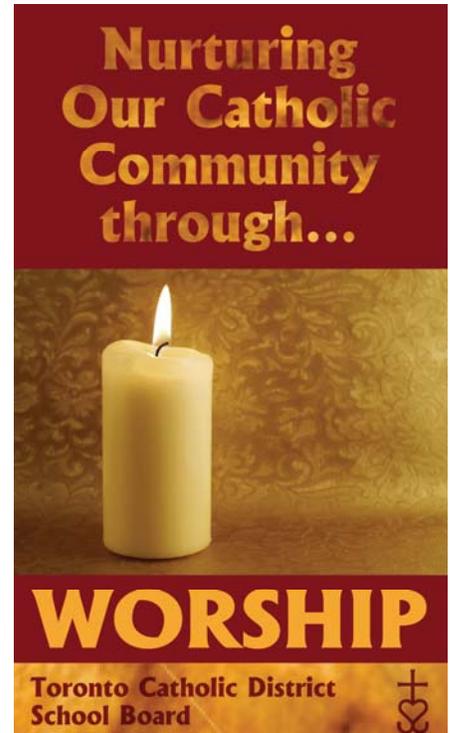
"Our true challenge is to return to the center, to the heart,
and to find there the gentle voice that speaks to us and
affirms us in a way no human voice ever could.
- *The Death of Innocents
An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*
Helen Prejean
Vintage 01/06
ISBN: 0679759484

An Excerpt from *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions* by Sister Helen Prejean.

Sister Helen Prejean discusses two cases of innocent men executed by the government. Here is an excerpt on the spiritual practice of compassion.

"Is God vengeful, demanding a death for a death? Or is God compassionate, luring souls into love so great that no one can be considered 'enemy'?"

*"Since I had discovered that the Gospel of Jesus inaugurated a radically new community that included everybody and where no person was considered to be 'outside the pale' of humanness, my soul expanded and I felt more compassion toward all sorts of people, even criminals, and even toward the ravaged earth itself and species threatened daily with extinction. With such compassion growing in me, how could I worship a God less compassionate than I? This compassion had lured me into the lives of indigent, struggling African Americans in a housing project in New Orleans and from there onto death row, a journey I recounted in *Dead Man Walking* and a journey I continue today. On this path I have learned that love, far from being passive in the face of injustice, is a vibrant force that resists and takes bold action to 'build a new society within the shell of the old,' as Dorothy Day used to say.*



"The Catholic Church has not been the only Christian denomination to teach support for the death penalty. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, most mainstream Christian denominations in the United States blessed the state's right to kill criminals."

- *Mother Teresa*
In the Heart of the World
Becky Benenate
New World Library
ISBN: 1-57731-065-9

Some of her favorite stories are included in this volume including ones on opening the heart, noticing beauty in others, giving freely, and seeing Jesus in the distressing disguise of suffering individuals.

- *The Mother Teresa Wisdom Deck*
50 Inspiration Cards
Mother Teresa
New World Library
ISBN: 1577314972

This card deck comes with a built-in frame for displaying the quotations or one of the nine duotone photographs of Mother Teresa printed on the back of the cards. The deck is organized into the following categories: Joy, Silence, Generosity, Faith, Sacrifice, Poverty, Prayer, and Love.

- *Seeing with Our Souls*
Monastic Wisdom for Every Day
Joan Chittister
Sheed & Ward 03/02 Paperback \$14.95
ISBN: 1-58051-123-6

She calls us to act justly and compassionately in a world where chaos, fear, separation, and hatred loom large on the horizon. The twelve chapters here, each based on a scripture passage, are arranged around those qualities of soul that offer hope in these troubled times. Joan Chittister offers concise meditations from her monthly spiritual newsletter in this new resource.

An Excerpt from *Seeing with Our Souls: Monastic Wisdom for Every Day* by Joan Chittister

Here she comments on the meanings of compassion:

"I always wonder why it is that we ask whether a candidate for the presidency is tough enough to push the nuclear button but we never ask if they are strong enough not to. I can't help but wonder if that might not have something to do with the Compassion Quotient of contemporary culture. . . .

"Compassion is not indifference to sin; it is the understanding of how sin happens to the best of us, including you and me.

"When another person is suffering and I do not suffer as well, I pretend that I am God. When another person is suffering and I suffer with that person, I admit that I, too, am only human."

- *Dorothy Day*
Selected Writings
Robert Ellsberg
Orbis Books 1992
ISBN: 0-88344-802-5

This text draws together excerpts from Day's books, articles, and columns. In these pages Dorothy Day (1897-1980) spins out her understanding of the Gospel, the value of voluntary poverty and suffering, the imperatives of compassion and service to the poor, and the significance of nonviolence and peacemaking.

- *From Brokenness to Community*
Jean Vanier
Paulist Press
ISBN: 0809133415

This paperback contains two lectures given at Harvard Divinity School in 1988 by the founder of L'Arche ("The Ark") movement. Jean Vanier's experiences living and working with men and women with mental disabilities have given him a unique slant on the meaning of community. Charting the movement from brokenness to healing, Vanier sees community as God's sign of transformation to the world outside.

Film Resources

1. The Passion of the Christ

Directed by Mel Gibson

20th Century Fox Home Entertainment 02/04 DVD/VHS Feature Film

R - scenes of graphic violence

Gibson has also chosen to be extremely graphic in his depiction of Jesus' suffering. In the opening scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, he visibly shakes and has to steady himself against a tree as he experiences the agony of the impending betrayal. "I wanted to show the humanity of Christ as well as the divine aspect," he has said. "It is a rendering that for me is as realistic and as close to possible to what I perceive the truth to be."

2. The Elephant Man

Directed by David Lynch

Paramount Home Entertainment 01/80 DVD/VHS Feature Film

PG Dr. Frederick Treves (Anthony Hopkins), a surgeon, first sees John Merrick (John Hurt) in 1884 on exhibit in a show managed by Bytes (Freddie Jones). The doctor borrows the elephant man, as he is called, for a lecture delivered before the London Pathological Society. Merrick's affliction is a disfiguring tumour disease characterized by cauliflower-like growths on his skin and a misshapen head with a mass of bony lumps. In this very interesting and moving film, we are challenged to clarify our values in regard to "very special people" (a term which should replace the freak epithet). We are also invited to examine the complex nuances of benevolence and the potential of the human spirit to transcend genetic impairments.