

COMMUNITY GUIDING REFLECTIONS ON THE XIX GENERAL CHAPTER STATEMENT

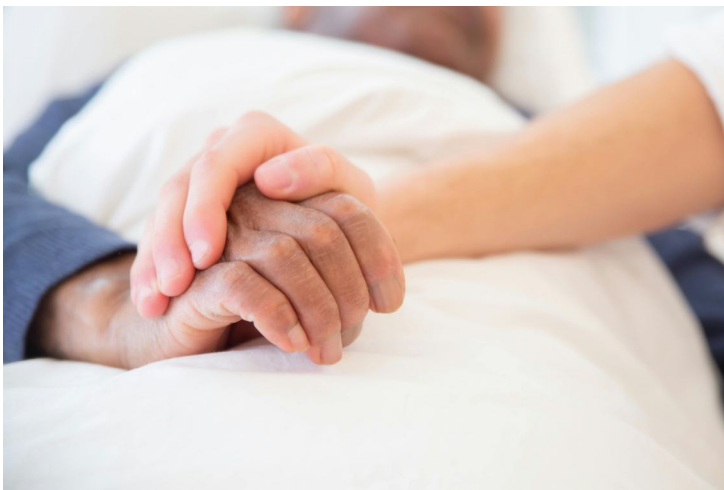


Part 1
Our Personal
Wounds

Guide 2
Empathy, Compassion,
Involvement

EMPATHY

Restoring the Joy of Being Together



“Wounded world” has become almost a refrain born of a renewed human awareness of the fragility that characterizes us at every level. Human fragility is a common living vein that connects us all beyond race, religion, and nationality. We humbly recognize ourselves in need of others. Disconnected from this vein, we die out, our life has no meaning, no purpose.

Empathy is the attitude to minimize our ego, our superiority complex, and place ourselves in a common ground. Even more, “Empathy means putting oneself in the place of others, taking charge of the situation they are experiencing, weighing their feelings, doing so from love, which is to say from God himself, because the Triune God is love.” (Francis, Homily 12.05.2020)

Though we are very committed missionaries, often we feel unrecognized, ignored, or just taken for granted that we are fine. This ‘thorn’ in our flesh can infect the whole life in isolation. Turning to others, whether in search of empathy or out of empathy, is what can pull us out from losing the joy of our consecration.

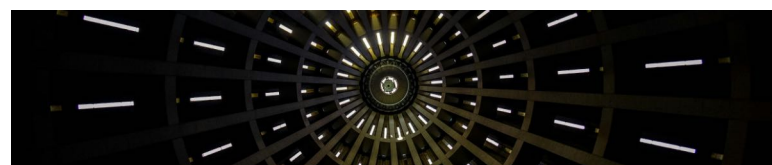
The wounds that people experience impel us, the Divine Word Missionaries, to empathize with them, soothe the pain of their suffering, and heal their woundedness.

(Faithful to the Word 6, n. 3)

“When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

(Jn 2:3)

Mary’s simple observation at the wedding feast in Cana reveals true empathy—the capacity to notice others’ distress even when unrecognized by those affected. She perceived the wine shortage and its implications, expressing compassionate concern for the shame that would soon affect the celebration. Her empathy responded to ordinary human need with attentiveness, demonstrating that empathy begins with willingness to step outside our preoccupations and notice subtle signs of distress others miss. Mary’s empathetic observation became the catalyst for Jesus’ first miracle, revealing how human compassion creates space for divine action—she brought human need to Jesus’ attention, trusting divine love would respond appropriately. Her empathy bridged human fragility and divine power, showing that our compassionate awareness of others’ wounds becomes channels for God’s healing intervention, while demonstrating that empathy is active participation in God’s restorative work that allows divine grace to flow into wounded situations.



REFLECTION

1. How has your own experience of feeling “unrecognized, ignored, or taken for granted” as a missionary actually prepared you to notice and respond empathetically to similar wounds in others who might be suffering in silence?
2. In what specific ways can you cultivate Mary’s attentiveness to notice the subtle “wine shortages” in your community—those moments when others’ joy or celebration is quietly threatened—and how might your empathetic response become a bridge for Christ’s healing intervention?

COMPASSION

Learning from Jesus to trust in each other



Empathy empowers us to have compassion. To have compassion denotes an action that responds to a stirring of the heart, that is, of the whole person. Compassion is not a feeling, but an inner mobilization that moves a person from their present state (stillness, tranquility, apathy, indifference) and places them alongside the situation that caused the upheaval.

“Compassion is one of the three characteristics of God’s way, along with closeness and tenderness. It is, therefore, a powerful force, and cannot be reduced solely to an interior, intimate aspect, because it also has an evidently public, social dimension, so that the narrative reveals itself as a force of memory, therefore, a guardian of the past, but also, precisely for this reason, a leaven of transformation for the future.” (Francis, Epilogue to the book ‘La Tessitura del Mondo’ by Andrea Monda, 2025)

Compassion makes you see reality as it is; it’s looking through the lens of the heart of God. “Our God is a God of compassion, and compassion—we can say—is God’s weakness, but also his strength. It is what gives us the most: because it was compassion that moved him to send us the Son. It is the language of God.” (Francis, Homily at Santa Marta, 17.09.2019)

Encountering these wounds challenges our faith, but they make us wounded healers as well, in our duty to bring relief and healing to those who are deeply scarred. Thus, we become more compassionate towards them.
(Faithful to the Word 6, n. 3)

“His mother said to the servers, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”
(Jn 2:5)

Being our strength and our weakness also, compassion equips us to comprehend the reality we are in the community, without judgements nor justifications. Like Jesus with his disciples, through compassion we aim at bringing out the best of each one for the good of all.

Mary’s directive to the servants in the Wedding in Cana story reveals compassion as active trust that moves beyond empathetic awareness into collaborative action. After recognizing the wine shortage, she doesn’t merely sympathize but mobilizes others to participate in the solution. Her words “do whatever he tells you” show compassion as surrendering control while maintaining engagement—she trusts Jesus completely yet remains present to facilitate the miracle. Mary’s compassion bridges human limitation and divine possibility by creating space for others to encounter Christ’s transformative power, showing that compassion is never passive sympathy but active participation in God’s healing work. Her instruction to the servants demonstrates how compassion equips us to see reality through God’s heart, moving us from our present state of comfort or indifference to stand alongside situations requiring transformation, thus becoming wounded healers who bring out the best in each person for the good of all.





REFLECTION

1. How has your experience of being wounded equipped you to offer compassionate guidance to others, similar to how Mary directed the servants toward Jesus despite not knowing exactly how the solution would unfold?
2. In what specific situations has compassion moved you beyond empathy into active collaboration with God's healing work, and how did trusting "whatever he tells you" transform both your understanding and your community's response to wounds?

INVOLVEMENT

Walking in hope for a better world

Missio Lucis embodies openness to and doing the will of God—honesty, compassion, reconciliation, and the pursuit of justice and peace wherever we live and work.

(Faithful to the Word 6, n. 23)

"Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the chief Steward.' So they took it."

(Jn 2:7-8)

The third stage is involvement, that is, getting involved in a situation, an action that removes my neutrality and places me at the center of the situation created. I cease to be a spectator, observer, or critic from a distance, to become part of what is at stake. We must always give back to those who have a certain right, and this always saves us from selfishness, indifference, and closing in on ourselves. "It could be said that, in ultimately, I am my heart, for it is what distinguishes me, shapes me in my spiritual identity, and places me in communion with other people." (Dilexit Nos, n. 14)

If we might paraphrase the gospel (Mt 12:32), we might say that anybody can be forgiven for causing a wound to the community, but there is no forgiveness to those who just criticize the wounds of that community from the outside, doing nothing to reach healing. On the contrary, the same commitment we have embraced to struggle for a better world, we need to live it also with our confreres, hoping for a better community life.





The servants' response to Jesus during the wedding in Cana reveals true involvement as moving beyond observation into committed action, even without fully understanding the outcome. They didn't remain neutral spectators questioning the logic of filling ceremonial purification jars with water or hesitate when asked to serve what appeared to be ordinary water to the wedding steward—instead, they placed themselves at the center of Jesus' work by actively participating in each step. Their involvement required abandoning the safety of distance and criticism, choosing instead to become part of the solution through concrete actions. The servants' willingness to fill the jars “up to the brim” and immediately draw from them shows how genuine involvement demands wholehearted commitment rather than a cautious response. Through their active engagement, they became witnesses to the transformation that occurs when we move from being distant observers to engaged participants in God's healing work. In doing so we will discover that involvement in the wounds and hopes of our community leads us to experience the miraculous healing of wounds and ensuing restoration.

REFLECTION

- 1. Have you ever experienced moving from being a “spectator, observer, or critic from a distance” to actively participating in your community's healing process? How has this changed your understanding of both the wounds and the possibilities for transformation?**
- 2. In what specific situations is Jesus currently asking you to “fill the jars” and “draw some out”—to move beyond neutrality into wholehearted involvement in building a better community life with your confreres?**

“Your Light Must Shine” Mt 5: 16

