

## **EMBRACED BY COMPASSION** Pauline Compton OLSH

Heart spirituality begins with God's unconditional and self-giving love in Jesus who invites me to relationship with him and to share in his mission of love. An essential element in this spirituality is compassion.

*Jesus invites: Come to me ... learn from me* (Matt. 11:28-30). As Jesus lived from the source and spring that was his father so he calls me to live from him as the source and spring of my life. I am drawn to contemplate the human Jesus of the gospels, to be with him, to look at him, listen to him, wait for him, constantly gaze on him and learn to reach out to others in kindness and compassion.

It is especially when I experience the pain of my human limitations and the struggles of those whose lives touch mine that I need to return to Jesus and with him to the Father. I am increasingly aware of a duality in me and of the tendency to act out of fear rather than from love. I adjust to my environment and try to avoid the pain of "losing love" and so become separated from my true self, the ground of my being: the Spirit of Jesus, the embrace of God's unconditional love. The very longing of my heart is created by God's longing for me.

I am challenged, first, to honour what is happening in my heart, to listen and attend, to enter the depths of my being where I encounter his presence and love. By pure gift I am drawn into the embrace of God whose transforming love draws me to a deepening knowledge and acceptance of self and to surrender to him. This of course, is not a once and for all happening! As I experience the freedom of God's redeeming love, I am enabled to grow in self-acceptance and integrity. Dependent on God, I learn compassion, am embraced by it and come to live by it.

It is especially at the foot of the cross that I see and learn compassion. As I contemplate Jesus on the cross I see three things: gross injustice together with man's inhumanity to man; Jesus' total self-giving and handing down of his Spirit; Mary standing beside and with Jesus. Here, I learn that I, too, am to stand with, suffer with, be with those who are poor or who are in any way deprived or marginalised.

So it is that Jesus calls me to be "with him" and to share the mission entrusted to him by the Father.