

# Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare  
Saginaw, MI

## *My Lent: The Gift of Compassion*

I like to remind myself this time of year that the word "Lent" comes from an Old English word "lencten" meaning "spring." As an avid gardener I like to think of Lent as a time when we can prepare our hearts for new growth just as we prepare our gardens for spring. As we turn over the soil in our gardens, we can become aware of some of the spiritually dormant places in our own lives, those blind spots that are so hard to see in ourselves. I noticed one blind spot of mine while talking to a friend who had just gone through a divorce.

She had discovered that her husband of 50 years had been having an affair with a younger woman. My friend was very shocked, angry and hurt. After two years of trying to save the marriage, they were divorced and managed to remain friends.

When she began to meet new people and to date another man, I said to her with some glee, "It must feel good to tell him you are seeing someone else." Her heartfelt response was: "I know that pain of rejection, and I don't want him to feel it."

Those compassionate words stopped me in my tracks and moved my heart. That is when my Lent started. I want my hardness of heart to soften. But how?

One of the most beautiful images of God's compassion is from the prophet Hosea:

*I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. (Hosea 11:4)*

Here God speaks so tenderly about easing our burdens and giving us food for nourishment. If we can accept God's compassion for us, I believe we can become more compassionate to others. I have heard compassion described as "womb-like," meaning compassion happens in a warm, nurturing, growth-promoting, safe environment. It gives us freedom to suffer with someone rather than to condemn them. Hurtful things do happen to us and we have scars from these injuries. However, it is what we do with this pain that counts.



My friend suffered the pain of rejection and divorce. Yet despite her anger, she chose to accept her husband's decision and to have compassion for him. This decision eased the pain in both their lives and the lives of their family.

I learned from my friend that anger and pain need not be the end result of life's wounding events. If we dig deep enough into ourselves where God's compassion to us is revealed, we may be able to share that compassion with others.

So it is that my Lenten meditations will be, speaking as a gardener, to dig deep into the soil of my soul so that God's gift of compassion to me may find light and warmth to grow and provide me with renewed compassion for others.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at: <http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

*Sr. Laura and Sisters*