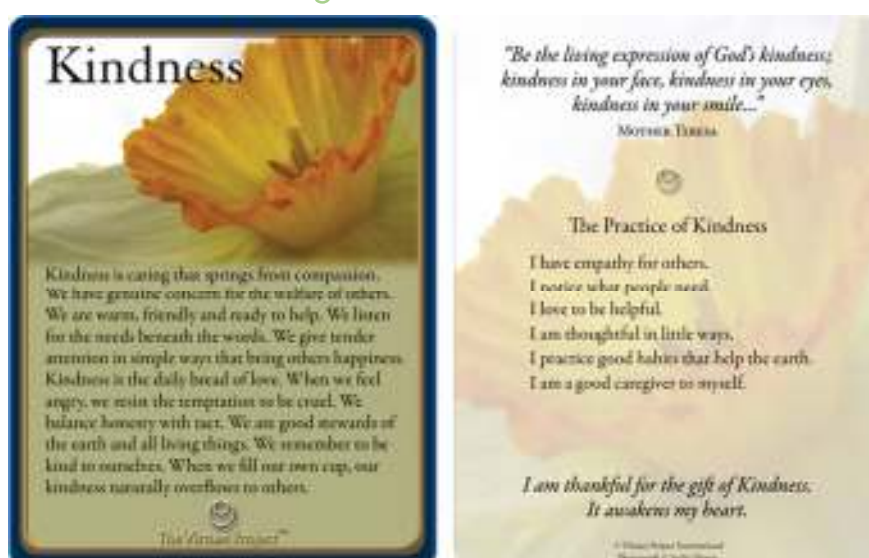


Compassionate & Loving



Compassionate towards others, near and far, especially the less fortunate; and **loving** by their just actions and forgiving words.

By being **compassionate** and **loving** in the way pupils are treated, especially when a pupil is in trouble; and by opening pupils' eyes to those who suffer poverty, injustice or violence.

The word **compassion** comes from two Latin words: cum meaning with and passio meaning to change, especially in the sense of suffering adverse change.

To be **compassionate** is to experience suffering or change alongside someone else – to listen to their cares and concerns and to share their joys and sorrows (The Characteristics of Jesuit Education n.4-3), to see the world through their eyes, to step into their shoes, to empathize.

Being able to empathize is a virtue very necessary for being a good human being. To live successfully in a family, or a school community, or workplace, or in wider society, means being able to see, understand and feel things from other points of view, even ones to which I may not be particularly sympathetic. In the Christian tradition, it is never enough simply to be attentive: we must allow ourselves to be moved by what we see, especially by the plight of those who suffer or are less fortunate than we are.

Getting children to stop and notice how others are experiencing their lives, and how they feel, and why they say and believe what they do, is an important aspect of parenting and teaching. Ultimately, it is what makes us kind and, at a deeper level, opens up the possibility of being **loving** through our just and merciful actions and forgiving words.

Jesus' great commandment is "Love one another." (John 13:34) The more we love others, the more we are truly human and most truly ourselves.

Love is something that is learned not by being taught but by having first experienced it for ourselves. Parents are the first and best teachers by what they say and do (Rite of Baptism n.77). The most important lesson they teach their children is love. It is by being loved that we learn to love.

Of course, it is easy to love those who love us. In speaking about love, Jesus throws out the challenge to take love deeper: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'" (Matthew 5:43-44) This is where love becomes challenging. To love in this way is to love as God loves.

Schools build on the foundations laid by parents. By building up communities characterised by compassion and love, Schools create the context in which children can learn and acquire these virtues for themselves. Schools can also show children people, living and dead, who exemplify these virtues and, conversely, show situations where their opposites have done terrible damage to people and society. In an educational context, we should take children to horizons of experience that may be very unfamiliar to them and give them perspectives which allow them to see the world as the compassionate and loving God sees it, "gazing down on the face and circuit of the earth and deciding to work the redemption of the human race." (Spiritual Exercises n.106-7)

Our Compassionate God
Psalm 146:1, 3, 6 (Craill)

Alleluia!
Praise the Lord for He is good;
sing to the Lord for He is loving.
He heals the broken-hearted;
He binds up all their wounds.
The Lord raises the lowly.



God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Teacher," he asked, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.'"

Jesus said, "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples."

