

EMPATHY

by Joan, tenant.

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"So Long as you can sweeten another's pain, life is not in vain", (Helen Keller)

During this pandemic and preparations for the upcoming elections ,emphasis has been given to the need for leadership. Recently, commentators seemed united in the character most needed in a leader as his or her **empathy**". That word stuck with me and led me into observing and listening to those in the scientific, medical and governing fields who hold prominent positions on the world stage. What am I looking for? Is it discernment of those in power who have "empathy."?

With time available, I began a quest into various meanings offered for "empathy". The "the ability to put oneself in the other fellows' place" or "involves our feeling another person's pain". Therefore, empathy describes something deeper than "sympathy". Sympathy being described as "feeling **for** another" as opposed to empathy which is the ability to "feel **with** another. As I understand it, empathy is similar to virtue, in that it grows within us as we allow pain to bring us through heartbreaks. Thus, allowing the heart to expand its capacity to enter another's pain, and with understanding, kindness and compassion. The Franciscan, Richard Rohr, goes further to call compassion "the sympathy of God for the world". He concludes, "when we truly love we move out of our small, individual selves to unite with another". Are we not experiencing this phenomenon through the actions of first responders and those doctors and nurses in the frontlines...Divine Love flowing through ordinary human beings?

In her book "Leadership In Turbulent Times" the author reveals the events in the lives of Lincoln, who guided us through the Civil War and Emancipation, Theodore Roosevelt, who is credited for cleaning up corruption of the Industrial Revolution,, and Franklin Roosevelt, who led our country through the Depression and World War II, each of whom overcame physical disabilities and personal tragedy. If anything, this pandemic has made obvious (to quote Rohr}, "the extending outward over our egos to give up separation, superiority and control".

Hang in! God is working.

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