



I know how the flowers felt

The rain to the wind said, "You push and I'll pelt."
They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay lodged-- thought not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.

-Robert Frost

Reflect on the pain that you have experienced during your SERVICE year. What have been the most difficult moments? What have you relied upon to get you through?

How do you explain life's unfairness? In what way is Jesus the Redeemer a role model for how to deal with suffering in our lives?

We have wise persons in our lives who have given us insights into suffering. Who is your wise person and what have you learned from him or her?

When have you seen sufferings of the year transformed by God?

What sufferings remain unresolved?

Identify a pain you carry that God may be able to transform. Is there forgiveness that you need to seek? Forgiveness that you need to give?

Healing presence

“No effort, suffering or sacrifice should be too big if it concerns the love of neighbor.”

Mother Alphonse Maria Eppinger

Excerpt from Henry Nouwen:

When do we receive real comfort and consolation? Is it when someone teaches us how to think or act? Is it when receive advice about where to go or what to do? Is it when we hear words of reassurance and hope? Sometimes, perhaps. But what really counts is that in moments of pain and suffering someone stays with us. More important than any particular action or word of advice is the simple presence of someone who cares.

When someone says to us in the midst of a crisis, "I do not know what to say or what to do, but I want you to realize that I am with you, that I will not leave you alone," we have a friend through whom we can find consolation and comfort. In a time so filled with methods and techniques designed to change people, to influence their behavior, and to make them do new things and think new thoughts, we have lost the simple but difficult gift of being present to each other. We have lost this gift because we have been led to believe that presence must be useful. We say, "Why should I visit this person? I can't do anything anyway. I don't even have anything to say. Of what use can I be?"

Meanwhile, we have forgotten that it is often in "useless," unpretentious, humble presence to each other that we feel consolation and comfort. Simply being with someone is difficult because it asks of us that we share in the other's vulnerability, enter with him or her into the experience of weakness and powerlessness, become part of uncertainty, and give up control and self-determination. And still, whenever this happens, new strength and new hope is being born. Those who offer us comfort and consolation by being and staying with us in moments of illness, mental anguish, or spiritual darkness often grow as close to us as those with whom we have biological ties. They show their solidarity with us by willingly entering the dark, uncharted spaces of our lives. For this reason, they are the ones who bring new hope and help us discover new directions.

These reflections offer only a glimpse of what we mean when we say that God is a God-with-us, a God who came to share our lives in solidarity. It does not mean that God solves our problems, shows us the way out of our confusion, or offers answers to our many questions. He might do all of that, but his solidarity consists in the fact that he is willing to enter with us into our problems, confusions and questions.

Nouwen, McNeill, Morrison. *Compassion* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), pg. 13-14.

Reflection on healing presence

When you first came to SERVICE, did you understand service to be more about doing or being?

To whom in particular have you felt God called you to be a healing presence?

What does healing mean to you?

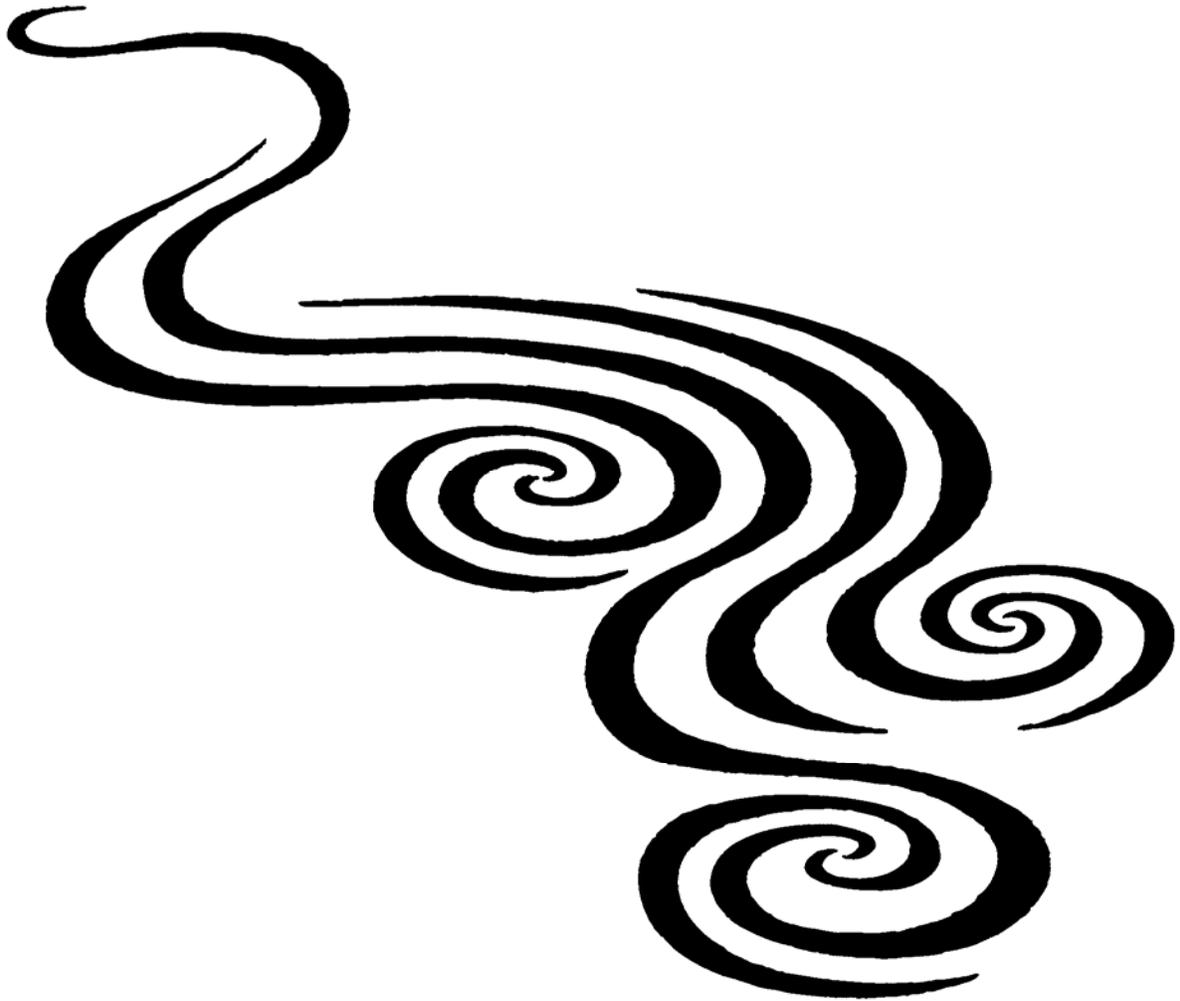
Describe any struggles you have had when you can not “fix” a situation. Reflect on what God expects of you in such situations.

Recall some of the stories you have been privileged to hear this year. How does your listening promote healing?

In what ways have you been a healing presence to your community? In what ways has it been difficult to do so... what stands in your way... what grace might assist you?

Reflect on the following question from God to you, “My child, I need you to be a healing presence to my people.” Describe ways in which you can be a healing presence for the remainder of your SERVICE year. Be specific, describe the “who, what, when, where, and how.” Challenge yourself to answer God’s call to be a healing presence even in areas that are still less comfortable for you (and don’t forget your call to be a healing presence in community life).

Reflection Material



Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." *Hosea 6:3*

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. *Matthew 14:28-29*

John answered them all, "I baptize you with ^[1] water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. *Luke 3:16*

Whoever believes in me, as ^[1] the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." *John 7:38*

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. *Revelation 22:17*

All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. *Ecclesiastes 1:7*

But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the **beach** we knelt to pray. *Acts 21:5*

So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. *Luke 5:11*

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. *John 21:4*