

# Compassion | WCCM

---

 [wccm.org/weekly-teachings/compassion-2](https://wccm.org/weekly-teachings/compassion-2)

15 July 2023

The Christian Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 4th century, on whose teaching John Cassian based his works, also form the foundation of Christian Meditation. John Main, our founder, rediscovered this way of prayer for us in Cassian's writings 'The Conferences', especially chapters nine and ten.

The virtue to which all spiritual work of the Desert Fathers and Mothers led was the supreme virtue of compassion; only increase in love for others is seen to be a reliable sign of spiritual growth. When John Main was asked, how we should prepare for meditation, he said "*by many acts of kindness*". In the end the essence is not how well you meditate but how well you love.

The desert way of life would eventually lead to a total transformation of being, a transformation into the fire of Love: '*Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and he said to him, "Abba, as far as I can, I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?" Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands toward heaven; his fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, "If you will, you can become all flame."*' God, the Divine energy, is Love. Meditation will lead us to experience this love deeply within our own being and we too will be transformed by it.

Everything the Abbas and Ammas did and taught was done out of compassion for those still caught by their 'demons': "*A brother asked Abba Sisoës, saying, 'What shall I do, Abba, for I have fallen? The old man answered: 'Get up again'. The brother says, 'I got up and fell again.' The old man continued, 'Get up again and again.' The brother asked, 'Till when?' The old man answered, 'Until you have been seized either by virtue or by sin.'*"

Their refusal to judge others is another sign of compassion. Our ingrained habit of always judging ourselves is in fact a clear lack of compassion. Only when we accept ourselves as we are, warts and all, can we truly accept and love others.

Compassion is therefore the true foundation and the fruit of their practice and our practice. It is considered even more important than prayer:

*"It can happen that when we are at prayer some brothers come to see us. Then we have to choose, either to interrupt our prayer or to sadden our brother by refusing to answer him. But love is greater than prayer. Prayer is one virtue amongst others, whereas love contains them all."* (John Climacus)