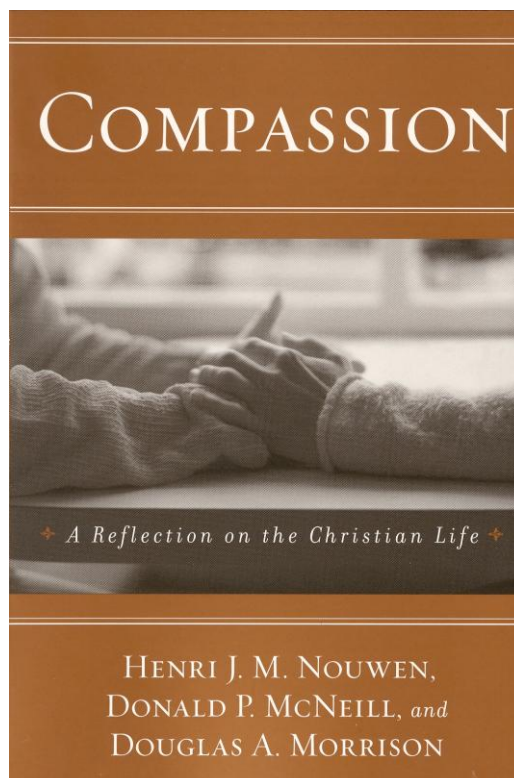


A STUDY GUIDE FOR
COMPASSION
A Reflection on the Christian Life

By

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Study Guide Discussion and Questions

Discussion Guide to Be Completed Before Session 1

Session 1: Meditating on Philippians 2:1-11

The Letter to the Philippians was written sometime between 60-62AD while St. Paul was under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial as a result of his appeal to the Emperor Nero (Acts 25:1-12), one of his rights as a Roman citizen. It was written to thank the Philippian Christians for money they had sent to support him while he was in prison (Philippians 4:1-10) and to urge them to greater unity in their love for Christ.

At that time, Philippi was a Roman colony in northeastern Greece, named for Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The Church in Philippi was the first Christian community established on the continent of Europe, probably around 52-54AD. Read about this in Acts 16:6-40.

Several important themes run throughout the *Letter to the Philippians*. One is the theme of joy: the words “joy” and “rejoice” are found 16 times, each a reference to joy *in Christ*. The phrase “in Christ” is found 19 times and is the context in which a Christian is to live. Christians live “in” union with Christ, “in” His Body the Church. This letter also contains one of the most important doctrinal statements of the entire New Testament about who Christ is and how we are to live in imitation of Him: 2:1-11, which serves as one of the key Scriptural passages at the foundation of *Compassion*.



Greece: ancient Philippi is in the north



The ruins of the ancient city of Philippi today

Spend 15 minutes slowly reading and meditating on Philippians 2:1-11, one of the key Scriptural texts that form the basis of this book. Then answer the following questions:

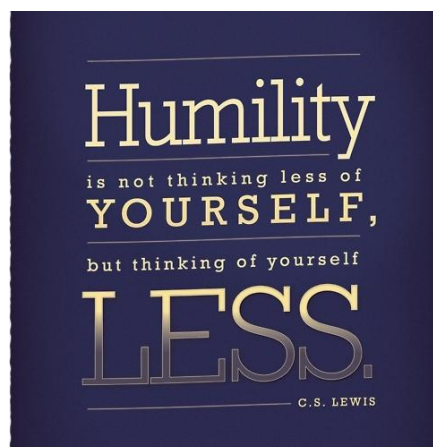
- 1.) What are the 4 characteristics of Christian community according to St. Paul?

Are these evident at St. Paul's? How so?

- 2.) Have you ever done anything from selfish ambition or conceit? What? Is it something you've realized was wrong and repented of?
- 3.) Do you look to the interests of others, even above your own? Do you put others first? Why do you think it is so difficult for us to put the interests of others first?
- 4.) "In humility, value others above yourselves," St. Paul writes. A humble person is a loving person. Only with the coming of Christ – "who humbled Himself" – is humility, for the first time in human history, considered a virtue.

What is humility? Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003) writes about the word in both English and Russian: "The word "humility" comes from the Latin word *humus* which means "fertile ground" –

humility is the situation of the earth. The earth is always there, always taken for granted, never remembered, walked upon by everyone, a place where we cast all our refuse, all that we don't want, our manure. It's there, silent and accepting, and in a miraculous way making out of all our refuse a new richness in spite of corruption, transforming corruption itself into a power of life and creativity, open to the sunshine, open to the rain, ready to receive any seed we sow and bringing forth thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold out of any seed we sow." A humble person is like fertile soil enabling others to grow. "Humility in Russian means being in a state of peace, when a person has made peace with God's will. Such a person has given himself over to God's will boundlessly, fully and joyfully, and says to the Lord – do with me



whatever You want!” Given these two definitions: are you a humble person? What circumstances in your life have taught you the value of humility? Does the quote from C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) make sense to you? Do you see the difference between these two approaches to humility?



5.) As you meditate on these verses from Philippians, can you begin to grasp the immensity of the fact that the One through whom the universe was created (read John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17) – a universe with more than 3,000 galaxies currently visible using the Hubble space telescope, each with more than a 100,000 million stars – who is divine, who is outside of space and time as we know it, who is described in the Liturgy as “incomprehensible” and “beyond understanding, existing forever and always the same,” who is immortal and beyond death, took the “form of a slave” and was “obedient unto death, even death on a cross” for *you*? This sense of *awe* is the beginning of the “fear of God” or “fear of the Lord” spoken of in the Scriptures, the Liturgy and the saints for nearly four millennia. What does this “fear of the Lord” lead to in our lives? Look up the following passages in Scripture:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of _____ (Proverbs 1:7)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of _____ (Psalm 111:10)

The fear of the Lord is to hate _____ (Proverbs 8:13)

Fear God and keep His _____ (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints (Psalm 89:7).

(Remember that before we receive communion, the priest invites us forward saying, “With the fear of God, with faith and with love, draw near.” The fear of God is one of the prerequisites for receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.)

Session 1: Written Reflections on Questions 1-5

Session 2: What is compassion?

In the Preface it says “This book began in a small Greek restaurant in Washington, DC” and is the fruit of a series of discussions by three Roman Catholic priest/professors “discontent with the individualism and spiritual dryness” they found in their teaching positions at Notre Dame, Catholic University and Yale.”

Introduction

The authors begin by stating that “the word compassion generally evokes positive feelings.” They state that we like to think of ourselves as basically good, understanding and compassionate people. We identify being compassionate with being human. “An in-compassionate human being seems as inconceivable as a non-human human being.” But then comes all the questions: “If being human and being compassionate are the same, then why is humanity torn by conflict, war, hatred and oppression? Why do so many suffer from hunger, cold, and lack of shelter? Why are millions suffering from alienation, separation or loneliness? Why do we hurt, torture and kill each other? Why is our world in such chaos?”

1. What is the Latin derivation of the modern English word given on page 3? What then does it mean to be truly compassionate?
2. Why does genuine compassion seem to be so difficult for us? Why is true compassion not our most natural reaction to suffering? (p. 4)
3. What do you think of the quote from Peregrine Worsthorne on pp. 4-5? Is what he says true? Would a compassionate society be a sick society that abrogated individual freedom? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of former vice-president Hubert Humphrey’s use of a pencil to provide a definition of compassion in politics and life? “The main part of life is competition...in politics, compassion is just part of the competition” (page 6). Can you think of examples of this in your own life?
5. The authors agree with Mr. Humphrey that our primary frame of reference is competition, not compassion. Why do they say this? Do you agree or disagree? Is this a part of what we mean when we speak of sin?
6. The authors recognize the – at best – ambiguous place compassion holds in our lives. They also come to see that compassion is “the center of the Christian life” (page 7). The perspective they advance in order to understand the place of compassion in the Christian life is found in the

Lord Jesus' words: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate."
(Luke 6:36) What do they think about this passage of Scripture? Why do they think this is such a radical, life-changing command?

Parenthetically, we need to look at the Greek word that is here being translated as "compassionate" as it is a different word from the Greek word for compassion that they will discuss later, on page 14.

The original Greek of Luke 6:36 reads: Γίνεσθε οὖν οἰκτίρμονες, καθὼς καὶ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν οἰκτίρμων ἐστὶ. Only in Roman Catholic translations of the New Testament like the Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible is the word "compassion" used in translating this verse. In Protestant translations of the New Testament, such as the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the New International Version and the New King James Version, this is translated as "Be merciful as your Father is merciful." The word οἰκτίρμων (eek-TEER-mon) that is used to describe God here does not quite mean "merciful" either. The Greek word for mercy is "*eleos*" as when we sing "Kyrie eleison" or "Lord, have mercy" in the Liturgy. What, then, does this verse really say?

Perhaps a little better translation of οἰκτίρμων might be tenderness, tenderheartedness, as when we say tender loving care. This same word is used to describe God in one other place in the New Testament, at James 5:11 where in the old King James Version οἰκτίρμων is translated as "tender mercy."

7. What are the three movements of Christ's call to compassion, mercy and tenderness found on page 8 that will be discussed in the book?



Session 2: Written Reflections on Questions 1-7

Session 3: Emmanuel, God-with-us

Chapter 1 : Part 1 - The Compassionate God: *God-with-Us*

In Solidarity

1. The authors begin by stating that God is a compassionate God. “This means, first of all, that our God has chosen to be God-with-us.” How do they explain what this means?
2. Read John 1:1-14. The authors quote the New Revised Standard Version on p. 13. The Greek word translated there by the English word “lived” is, in the original Greek, ἐσκήνωσεν – which literally means “to pitch a tent.” This is also sometimes translated as “tabernacle” and is a direct reference to the Tabernacle or “Tent of Meeting” that God commanded the people of Israel to set up in the desert: please read Exodus 35:4-19 and Exodus 39:32-40:38. The Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting became the site of God’s presence among His people and the place where His glory dwelt (Exodus 40:34-35). The person of Jesus Christ, His flesh, is the fulfillment of the gift of the Tent of Meeting given to Moses and the people of Israel in the Old Testament. He is the new Tabernacle! He is the new Tent of Meeting! In Him we have seen God’s glory dwell among us!

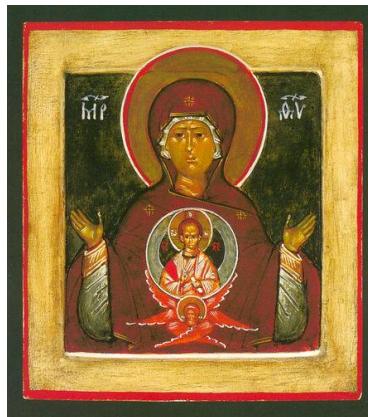


The Word was made flesh.....

3. What is the simple gift that the authors say we have lost on p.12? Do you think it's true? Why or why not?
4. What is the "new relationship of intimacy" that Emmanuel (God-with-us) enters into with us? Why is this even necessary?
5. Why is God's "commitment to live in solidarity with us" important? The authors say that Jesus is the "concrete embodiment of the divine compassion in our world." Does this make Christianity's understanding of God different from how other religions and philosophies understand God and His relationship with us? How so?

With Gut Feelings

6. What does the Greek word most often translated as "compassion" in the Gospels mean? (p.14) What are its implications for our understanding of compassion?
7. Read some of the Gospel stories where this word is applied to the Lord Jesus: Matthew 9:35-36; Matthew 14:13-21; and Luke 7:11-17. How does Jesus' compassion change things? How does this apply to us in our lives?
8. What is the "great mystery" of God's compassion as it becomes visible in the healing stories of the New Testament? (p.15)
9. What is meant by the quote "Jesus Christ reveals God's solidarity with us?" (p.15)
10. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Why did He who knew no sin become sin for us? What would it mean in your life for you to become "the _____ of God?"



The icon of "The Sign"
Read Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23

Session 3: Written Reflections on Questions 1-10

Session 4: Emmanuel, God-with-us

Chapter 1: Part 2 - The Compassionate God: *God-with-Us*

Toward New Life

1. What do the authors say is “the mystery of God’s love?” How does Jesus reveal God’s love? (p.16)
2. Discuss the authors’ statement, “The truly good news is that God is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, a God of revenge, but a God who is moved by our pains and participates in the fullness of the human struggle” (p. 16). What is your “image” of God? Do you feel that God is distant? Do you think of God as vengeful and vindictive, out to get you? Are you afraid of God? What is the difference between “the fear of God” discussed in the first session and “being afraid of God?”

Our Competitive Selves

3. How does competition determine our identity and sense of self? (p. 17)
4. Does competition stand in the way of our being compassionate? How?

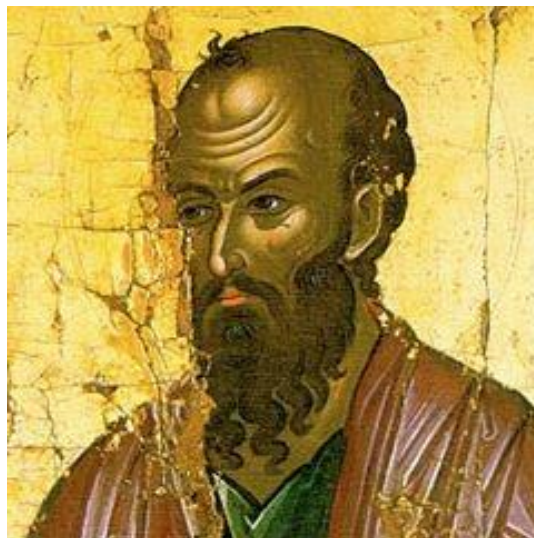
A New Self

5. Explain what you think the authors mean when they state that “Only God is not in competition with us.”
6. What is “the new self” and identity that the authors invite us to receive? (p. 19) The authors quote Galatians 2:20. Where do we see that verse every Sunday at St. Paul’s?
7. How is this idea of “the new self” as opposed to an “old self” spoken of in the Scriptures? Read Colossians 3:8-15; Ephesians 4:17-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17. List 4 things St. Paul says we’re supposed to “put off” or stop doing:

Now, list 4 qualities that St. Paul says we are to “put on” in conjunction with the new self that reflects the life of Christ in us:

Have you put on these qualities as part of your new life in Christ? How are these qualities expressed in how you live?

8. What is “the new self” free from and what does it make possible for us to do? (p.19)
9. How does divine compassion differ from self-made compassion, which may be part of the competition?
10. The Apostle Paul is held up by the authors as an example of what it means for a person to be deeply moved by God’s compassion. Can you think of others who might also be example of this? Who? Since you are called to put on “the new self” and are now, as Christians, a “new creation,” what might living into God’s compassion look like in your life?



St. Paul the Apostle

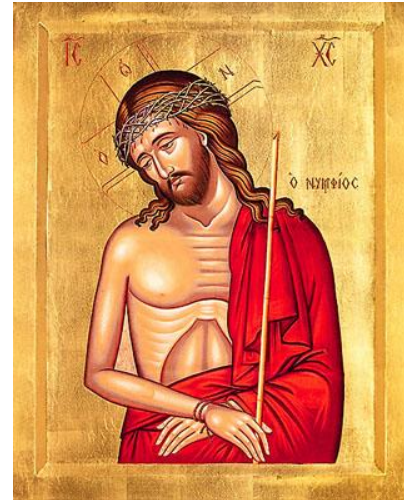
Session 4: Written Reflections on Questions 1-10

Session 5: Servant God

Chapter 2: Part 1 – Servant God

Jesus Emptied Himself

1. “In Jesus Christ we see the fullness of God’s compassion” (p. 21). St. Paul writes in Philippians 2 that the Lord Jesus - who is the Word of God and fully divine - did not cling to His equality with God the Father, did not cling to His divinity, but “emptied Himself” (ἐκένωσεν) and became a human being. Elsewhere, St. Paul writes: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). In these verses of Scripture we begin to enter deeply into the Christian understanding of who God is (the Trinity) and what He has done for us (the incarnation – a Latin word that literally means “the en-fleshment”). Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes: “Since humanity could not come to God, God has come to humanity, identifying Himself with us in the most direct way. The eternal Logos and Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, has become truly human, one of us. He has healed and restored our humanity by taking the whole of it into Himself. Christ shares to the full in what we are and so He makes it possible to share in what He is, in His divine life and glory.” How is our understanding of compassion linked with Jesus’ self-emptying humility?

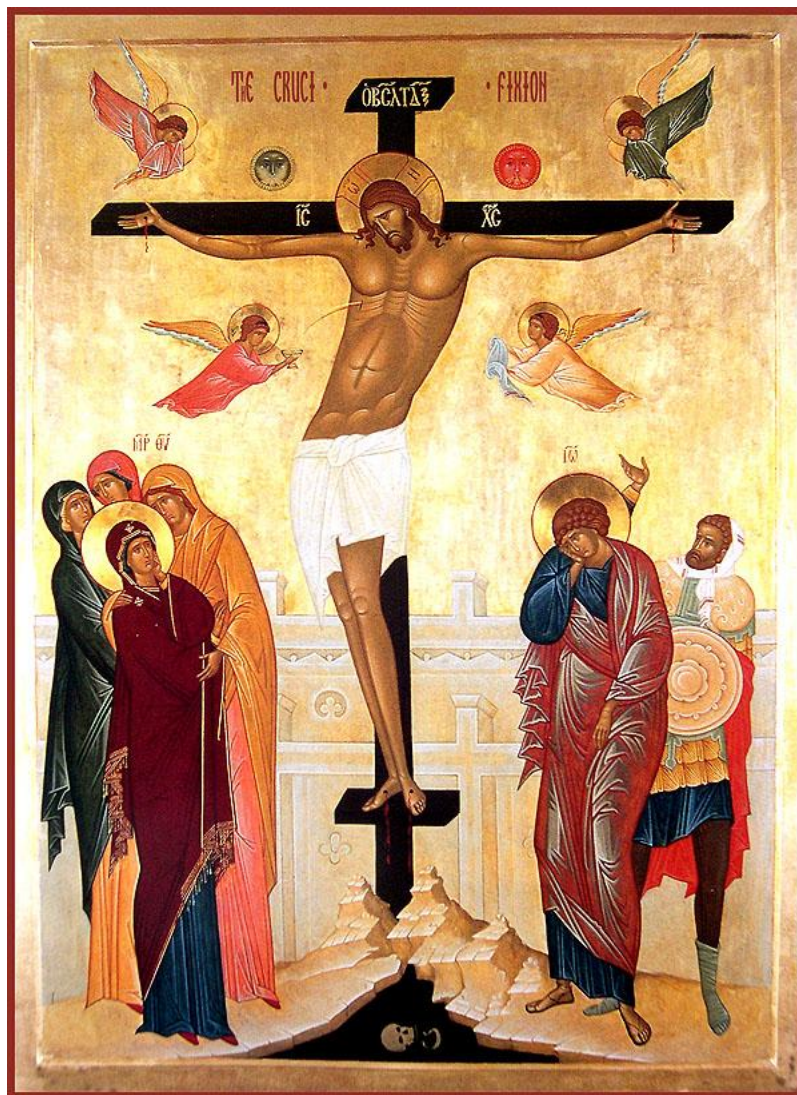


He Was Humbler Yet

2. In becoming fully and completely human, in the Person of Jesus, the eternal Word of God - through whom the universe was created (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17) - took on the condition of a slave/servant. What significance does this have for people (especially Christians) who seek status, security, and special favor?
3. According to the authors, why did Jesus suffer the humiliation, pain and agony of His crucifixion (p.24)? What does His ultimate servant-hood have to teach us about God’s self-sacrificing compassion?

The Downward Pull

4. If compassion is not reaching out from on high to those less fortunate, what do the authors say it is (p. 25)? Discuss this in terms of the Christian witness of Dwight and Leia at Isaiah House and the Catholic Worker Movement they represent.
5. “Jesus’ compassion is characterized by a downward pull” (p. 24). What is meant by the phrase: “downward pull?”
6. How is slavery/servant-hood the self-revelation of God?



“He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross...”
Philippians 2:8

Session 5: Written Reflections on Questions 1-6



Session 6: Servant God

Chapter 2: Part 2 – Servant God

*By this we may be sure that we live in Him:
whoever says "I live in Him" ought to walk just as He walked.
– 1 John 2:6*

In His Path

1. What do you make of all the Scripture passages quoted on pp. 26-27? What would it mean for you to “wrap yourself in humility, become like a little child and deny yourself?” What would it mean for you to “love your enemies?” Where may we see this command of Jesus to love our enemies in St. Paul’s on Sunday mornings?



*“You only know God to the extent that you love your enemies.”
– St. Silouan of Mt. Athos (1886-1938)*

2. How do “we become people in whose lives the compassionate presence of God in this world can manifest itself?” What do you think the authors mean when they use the phrase, “the road of the cross?”

Our Second Nature

3. What is our “second nature?” How do the authors describe it? (pp. 27-28)
4. Why does so much of Christian behavior seem “naïve” and “impractical” to those outside Christianity (p.28)?
5. Why is it a profound spiritual truth that service must be an expression of our search for God and not just the desire to bring about individual or social change? (p. 29)
6. What is “radical servant-hood”?

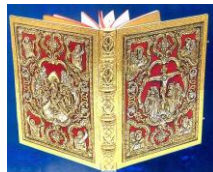
Joyful Servants

7. The authors state “wherever we see real service we also see joy.” What examples do they give of this joy? In serving others, have you ever felt that you are receiving more than you are giving?
8. How does all of this tie into the passage from Philippians 2:9-11? (p. 31)
9. Where does God’s compassion as revealed in Christ end? (p.31)

A comment: on page 31, towards the bottom of the page, the authors state that through the risen Christ “we have become children of the compassionate God who is both Mother and Father.” Well, yes and no. This statement is in line with something the two surviving authors – Don McNeil and Douglas Morrison – mentioned in the “Preface to the Revised Edition” about revising the original text of *Compassion* to make it “more gender-sensitive in the way it speaks of God.” They quote Rev. Gail O’ Day, a minister in the United Church of Christ, that “it is false to the richness of the Christian tradition to use Father language as generic language for God....” and that it is “...the church’s job to move beyond the assumption that Father is simply synonym for God.” Once again, the answer is yes and no.

The first thing that needs to be said about God is what we pray in the Liturgy: “*It is proper and right to sing to You, bless You, praise You, thank You and worship You in all places of Your dominion (Psalm 102:22); for You are God ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible (John 1:18), beyond understanding, existing forever and always the same; You and Your only begotten Son (John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9) and Your Holy Spirit.*” There is in this ineffable God who is beyond all human comprehension neither gender nor sexuality. However, as Christians we have been taught by the Lord Jesus – specifically in the Lord’s Prayer – to address God in prayer as “our Father” and **not** as “our Mother.” As obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus this is the **only** way we address God in prayer through Christ in the Holy Spirit. As Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has written, “If we were to start saying “Our Mother who art in heaven” we would not just be adjusting an incidental piece of imagery, but replacing Christianity with a new kind of religion. A Mother goddess is not the Lord of the Christian Church.”

Having said this, we also need to be aware of the fact that God’s love for us is far beyond any human love, even a mother’s love for her children. “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I shall not forget you!” (Isaiah 49:15 in the New International Version) So, we can say that God’s love for each one of us is infinitely deeper and richer than even a mother’s love for her nursing child.



Session 6: Written Reflections on Questions 1-9



Session 7: Obedient God

Chapter 3: Obedient God

The Inner Life of God

1. Because of Jesus Christ being Emmanuel, being God-with-us, being a suffering servant, “our human pain reverberates in God’s innermost self.” (p. 32) The implication of this statement is that your pain right now – whether physical, emotional or spiritual – reverberates in God’s innermost self. Does this thought enable you to see any more clearly into God’s infinite love for you in Jesus Christ? How?
2. Read Romans 8:35, 38-39. List below the things that St. Paul says can never separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus:

3. What do you think about the word “obedience”? Does it evoke negative or positive feelings in you? What is the Latin root of the word “obedience” and how is this word to be understood by Christians? (p. 34)

Attentiveness to the Beloved

4. What is the role that listening plays in our understanding of authentic servant-hood?
5. How and where does Mark’s gospel provide insight into the movement that exists between intimate listening and compassionate action in the life of Jesus? (p. 37)

With God’s Love in Us

6. Do Christians “search for suffering as a goal in itself” in following Jesus and seeking to become instruments of His compassion in the world? Are Christians masochists? Why not?
7. Do you believe that you “can give new life to others?” Do you believe Jesus’ promise to His disciples in John 14:11-13? What are the works of Jesus that you are doing in your life?

Without Fear

8. What do you think of the description of the “normal Christian world” by the unnamed brother who worked among the poor in Argentina? (p. 44)
9. At St. Paul’s, are we “effective witnesses to God’s compassion and signs of hope in the midst of a despairing world?” (p. 45) Why or why not?



Session 7: Written Reflections on Questions 1-9

Session 8: Community

Chapter 4: The Compassionate Life - Community

No Individual Stardom

1. The New Testament message is that the compassionate life is a life together, a life in community, the community of the Church, His Body. What does this look like in the New Testament passages cited on page 48? What is different about the first Christian community in Jerusalem from Christian communities today?

Walking on the Same Path

2. What does it mean to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16)? Besides Philippians 2:5, read Colossians 3:2-15. Part of acquiring the mind of Christ is to set our minds on “things above...where Christ is.” To acquire the mind of Christ, St. Paul writes in Colossians that we must “put to death” certain characteristics in us: what are they? List them.

Are you engaged in the process of putting these to death in you? (In the life of the Church we call this process “asceticism.”) What do you still struggle with?

To acquire the mind of Christ, we must “put on” what virtues in the spiritual life? List them.

Are you engaged in the process of putting on these virtues?

3. Why is it stated by the authors that compassion cannot be separated from community? How does having the mind of Christ gather us together in community?

Bombarding the Senses

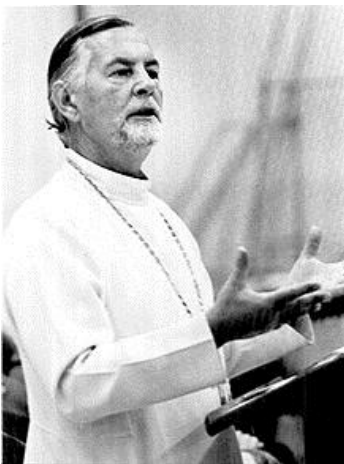
4. Can the mass media, which depicts all sorts of global suffering, lead to “greater compassion?” Do you agree or disagree with the authors. Do we sometimes feel the psychic numbness and anger the authors describe because we see so much suffering on TV, the internet and other forms of mass media?

Community as Mediator

5. What do you think of the authors’ statement that “wherever true Christian community is formed, compassion happens in the world.” (p. 55) What ramifications does this have for our life at St. Paul’s? For Philoptochos? For FOCUS? What are the strengths of our working together in community, as the Body of Christ, as opposed to individually?

Sense of Belonging

6. Do you agree with the statement “apart from a vital relationship with a caring community, a vital relationship with Christ is not possible?” (p.59) Why or why not? Give examples.



When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable (Matthew 25:31-46) answers: love - not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous “poor,” but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life.

- Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983)

Session 8: Written Reflections on Questions 1-6

Session 9: Displacement

Chapter 5: The Compassionate Life -Voluntary Displacement

Voluntary displacement is another way of saying that Christians live *in* the world but are not *of* the world (John 17:14). Christians live in the world, but do so as “aliens and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11) because we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), are “fellow citizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19) and therefore our true “citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). This way of understanding the Christian life has huge implications for how we live here and now.

Moving from our Ordinary and Proper Place

1. Do you feel an “enormous pressure” to be an “ordinary and proper” person, comfortable living in an ordinary and proper way? The authors state that “the Gospels confront us with this persistent voice inviting us to move from where it is comfortable...” What do we discover in voluntary displacement? Why is displacement so important?
2. What is the root of the Greek word for church? What does it mean for Christians to be “called out” by the Word of God to form His community, His Church? (p. 62)

Following the Displaced Lord

3. Jesus voluntarily displaced Himself (Philippians 2:6-7). He gave up the heavenly places and took a humble place, the place of a slave. What are some of the ways Jesus voluntarily displaced Himself during His life in this world? (p.63) Where have you voluntarily displaced yourself in following Christ?

To Disappear as an Object of Interest

4. How are we to understand the difference between displacement and voluntary displacement?
5. The authors give examples of persons who chose voluntary displacement. “Their sole aim was to disappear as an object of interest...and thus became real members of the human family in hiddenness and compassion.” How can we gain the necessary distance from the world to enter into it in a new way?

St. Francis of Assisi

6. St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), one of the most widely known of all Christian saints, is offered by the authors as an example of voluntary displacement. St. Francis of Assisi is someone it is worth your while to get to know. It is he whom the city of San Francisco is named after. You can read more about him and his life at Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_of_Assisi



Below is the text of the first known letter St. Francis addressed to all Christians:

O, how happy and blessed are those who love the Lord and do as the Lord himself said in the Gospel: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul, and your neighbor as yourself. Therefore, let us love God and adore him with a pure heart and mind. This is His particular desire when He says: True worshipers adore the Father in Spirit and truth. For all who adore Him must do so in the Spirit of truth. Let us also direct to Him our praises and prayers, saying: "Our Father in heaven," since we must always pray and never grow slack.

Furthermore, let us produce worthy fruits of repentance. Let us also love our neighbors as ourselves. Let us have charity and humility. Let us give alms because these cleanse our souls from the stains of sin. Men lose all the material things they leave behind in this world, but they carry with them the reward of their charity and the alms they give. For these they will receive from the Lord the reward and recompense they deserve. We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh. Rather we must be simple, humble and pure. We should never desire to be over others. Instead, we ought to be servants who are submissive to every human being for God's sake. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on all who live in this way and persevere in it to the end. He will permanently dwell in them. They will be the Father's children who do His work. They are the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Prayer of St. Francis

*O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, harmony;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light, and
Where there is sorrow, joy.
Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved
as to love; for it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal Life.*

Something to Recognize

7. The authors suggest that voluntary displacement can only be an expression of discipleship when it is a response to a call – an act of obedience. What do they mean? Give examples.
8. Discuss the following statement: “Displacement is not primarily something to do or accomplish, but something to recognize.”
How can recognition help us to move from involuntary to voluntary displacement and find ourselves being converted through the process?

No Ordinary Citizens

9. How might you be called to a more drastic form of displacement? What might be God’s call for you to enter more deeply into Christian community?



The way to God lies through love of people. At the Last Judgment I shall not be asked whether I was successful in my ascetic exercises nor how many bows and prostrations I made. Instead I shall be asked: Did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners. That is all I shall be asked. About every poor, hungry and imprisoned person the Savior says ‘I: ‘I was hungry and thirsty, I was sick and in prison.’ To think that He puts an equal sign between Himself and anyone in need. I always knew it, but now it has somehow penetrated to my sinews. It fills me with awe.



- St. Maria (Skobtsova) of Paris (1891-1945)

Session 9: Written Reflections on Questions 1-9

Session 10: Togetherness

Chapter 6: The Compassionate Life - Togetherness

The Miracle of Walking on the Floor

1. There are many motives that bring people together, including hatred and fear. Can you think of examples of communities brought together by fear and/or hatred in today's world? What is the motive of togetherness that Christian community? What distinguishes authentic Christian community from other kinds of communities?
2. The authors state on page 77: "Christians who displace themselves by going to monasteries, foreign lands or places of great need, do not do such things to be special or praised but to reveal that what separates us is less important than what unites us." Is this how you have seen these particular vocations up until now? Do you have a vocation?

Seeing Each Other's Unique Gifts



The face of Christ on the iconostasis at St. Paul's

3. Much of the iconography at St. Paul's is done in mosaic. Use the metaphor of the mosaic used by the authors on page 78 to write personally about the new togetherness in community that constitutes the Church and what this should mean to us here at St. Paul's as we each use our unique gifts and struggle to become the mosaic of Christ's face (His presence) in the world. Where do you fit into this mosaic at St. Paul's?

Self-Emptying for Others

4. “Self-emptying does not ask us to engage ourselves in some form of self-castigation or self-scrutiny, but to pay attention to others in such a way that they begin to recognize their own value.” (p. 79) This kind of paying attention to others demands discipline and authentic obedience, in the sense of learning to listen to others in a new and deeper way. How has this been a part of your life until now? What are some of the ways you can develop this sense of self-emptying as a spiritual discipline in your own life?
5. Like Jesus, we empty ourselves for others. How might we “empty” ourselves for another person or people?
6. What do the authors mean when they say on page 80, “Every time we pay attention we become emptier, and the more empty we are the more healing space we can offer.” What example do they use? What examples can you share from your own experience?

Gathered by Vocation

7. The authors state on page 81 that in the formation of Christian community, “we come together not because of similar experiences, knowledge, problems, color or sex, but because we have been called together by the same God.” Do you see how this echoes St. Paul’s understanding of what the Church is? Read Galatians 3:26-28 and Colossians 3:11. List some of the social barriers that being called and baptized into Christ break down according to St. Paul:

What are the implications of all this for our Church in this country today, broken up as we are into “Greek” Orthodox, “Russian” Orthodox, etc.? Are we being faithful or unfaithful to St. Paul’s vision of the Church?

8. What is the Latin root of the modern English word vocation? Do you have a vocation or is that something only for clergy and monastics? What is the difference between a career and a vocation?
9. Does the illustration the authors use about John and Mary speak personally to you? How and why?

Session 10: Written Reflections on Questions 1-9

Session 11: Patience

Chapter 7: The Compassionate Way - Patience

A Discipline That Unveils

1. Discipline and discipleship belong together. One cannot truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ without discipline. What differentiates the typical understanding of discipline from the Christian understanding of discipline? What does discipline enable? (p. 88)
2. Why is discipline indispensable to the compassionate life?

Entering Actively into the Thick of Life

3. Can one be truly compassionate without being patient? Why or why not?
4. What are the negative associations attributed to patience? Compare them with the authors' understanding of what Christian patience is.
5. The authors point out that the single Greek word ὑπομονή (ee-po-mo-NEE) is translated into English in many different ways throughout the New Testament. For the authors, the active patience they describe is synonymous with endurance, perseverance and fortitude. Does knowing this impact in any way your understanding of the discipline of patience? Do the authors' Biblical examples help? How so?

Living in the Fullness of Time

6. What does it mean to live in the fullness of time? Have you ever experienced this?
7. What are the differences between the "clock time" by which we normally live our lives and the New Testament conception of time, the "fullness of time" that is the "time of salvation" spoken of by the authors?

Time for Celebrating Life with Others

8. What are some of the ways that patience opens us to God, the world, and others?



Session 11: Written Reflections on Questions 1-8

Session 12: Prayer

Chapter 8: The Compassionate Way - Prayer

With Empty Hands

1. The authors state on page 101 that “impatience pulls us away from prayer.” Are you too busy to pray? How is prayer connected to the discipline of patience and therefore to the compassionate life?
2. How do the authors define what prayer is and what it is not? (p. 102)

In the Spirit

3. Why is it impossible to speak about prayer without speaking about the Holy Spirit?
4. How does the Holy Spirit make true discipleship possible? (p. 103) How is prayer a “radical displacement?” (p. 105)
5. The spiritual life is life in the Spirit or the Spirit living in us (p. 103). How do you see prayer as the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? In your discipline of prayer, do you have what we as Orthodox Christians call a rule of prayer?



An All-Embracing Intimacy

6. “Prayer,” says the authors, “is the first and indispensable disciple of compassion.” (p. 106) Why is this so?
7. Share your thoughts about prayer as entering “into a deep, inner solidarity with all human beings so that in and through us they can be touched by the healing power of God’s Spirit.”

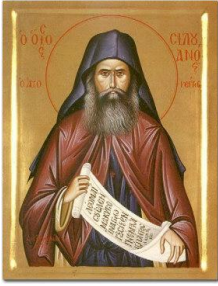
Our Enemies Too

8. What does praying for enemies do as part of the discipline of prayer?

Faithful to the Breaking of the Bread

9. “The breaking of the bread stands at the center of Christian community.” (p. 110) How does the Eucharist link us to the life of Christ?
10. What do we reclaim in the breaking of bread? (p. 112) What is one of your “bread connections,” a connection from Eucharist to service?

Session 12: Written Reflections on Questions 1-10



O Lord, as You prayed for Your enemies, so teach us, too, by You Holy Spirit, to love our enemies. O merciful Lord, by Your Holy Spirit teach us to love our enemies, and to pray for them with tears.

- St. Silouan of Mt. Athos (1886-1938)

Session 13: Action

Chapter 9: The Compassionate Way - Action

Here and Now

1. Prayer and action are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. (p.114)
How does compassionate prayer leads to compassionate action?
2. How do you understand the statement made on page 115: “In prayer we meet Christ, and in Him all human suffering. In service we meet people, and in them the suffering Christ.”
3. “Action with and for those who suffer is the concrete expression of the compassionate life and the final criterion of being a Christian.” Why is action, rather than prayer, the final criterion, the test of the real credibility of one’s Christian life? What does the Lord Jesus say in the Scriptures? How should we be living this out at St. Paul’s?

The Temptation of Activism

4. Activism can cause spiritual problems when an individual forgets that in Christ everything has been accomplished. Can you relate to this problem? What is the solution?

Not Without Confrontation

5. Compassion does not exclude confrontation but often calls for it. What is the key to compassionate confrontation and patient action? How do folks make sure that confrontation is not tinged with revenge?
6. What, do the authors say, is the best criterion for determining whether our confrontation is compassionate and righteous, rather than offensive and unrighteous?

In Gratitude

7. “The social activist of the 1960s who allowed their anger to fuel their actions soon found themselves burned out.” (p. 124) Actions that bear the marks of spiritual discipline are always characterized by gratitude. How is a compassionate life a grateful life? How is gratitude a sign of an action guided by the discipline of patience?
8. How do the words of 1 John 1:1-4 eloquently describe the source and meaning of compassionate action?

Session 13: Written Reflections on Questions 1-8

Session 14: Who is Dr. Joel Filartiga?

Epilogue: Dr. Joel Filartiga and his family – to whom this book was dedicated

THE HARVARD CRIMSON

The Art of Healing Paraguay

By SUSAN C. FALUDI,

Published: Friday, February 1, 1980

Dr. Joel Filartiga is a medical philanthropist and artist whose portraits of peasant life have recently circulated internationally. Filartiga runs a free medical service, the only one for miles, in the southeastern region of Paraguay. His condemnations of General Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay have won him the government's enmity and led to the political murder of his son in 1976. Taking on his nation's reform as a solo mission, he came to the United States last month to rally support in American colleges and to lobby in Washington, D.C.



The people of Paraguay have captured me," he explained in an interview following his address to a Harvard and Cambridge crowd which packed Phillips Brooks House to listen in shocked silence to his story, or rather to the story of Paraguay's ordeal since General Alfredo Stroessner took over in a coup d'etat in 1954. Despite Stroessner's stranglehold on the country, Filartiga believes he is "a slave of my people," not of the government.

In non-descript double-knit vest and mute-grey suit, his shirt bulging conspicuously at the waistline, Filartiga looks more like the semi-retired family g.p., benevolent but dilapidated. Nearsighted bug eyes peered out of thick spectacles. His roly-poly, bumbling figure gives him the image of a jolly plump man, not one laden by the responsibilities of nursing 37,000 mestizos who depend on him alone for health care.

Filartiga has run a free medical clinic in the Ybycui Valley in southeastern Paraguay for the last 18 years. He runs the clinic single-handedly, performing all operations alone, with the assistance of his wife, one assistant--last year, Elisa Kleinman, a Harvard medical student --and

two peasant aides he has trained as paramedics. Open from 8 a.m. until late evening, the clinic provides the only medical assistance to the isolated countryside.

After Filartiga leaves the clinic, sometimes as late as 2 or 3 a.m., he goes home to draw in stark angularities and symbolic distractions, the suffering of the people he serves. The blatantly political message in his drawings of peasant life--which have circulated widely, in California and Mexico two years ago--and his outspoken criticism of Stroessner's human rights violations have forced him into direct confrontation with Stroessner's secret police. He has been arrested and interrogated several times, his family called in for questioning. In 1976, Filartiga paid a devastating price for his political views: His 17-year-old son Joelito died after torture in a local police station.

As an artist, Filartiga wishes to expose his nation's pain, force outsiders to examine Paraguayan wounds and ultimately to heal them. As a doctor, Filartiga's artistic vision finds literal expression. But in his son's case, his physician status could not save the battered body that he found four hours after the child was kidnapped by the police.



Although Filartiga is certainly not the first victim of the repressive regime, few families in Paraguay will discuss their experiences, much less launch a protest because they fear reprisal. When torture ends in death--as is often the case in countries such as Paraguay where political violence is standard state policy--most families bury their dead quietly and lay low, hoping to be forgotten. According to Amnesty International reports, the main human rights violations committed under Stroessner's rule are indefinite detention without trial, torture, often resulting in death, and "disappearance" following arrest. (In Filartiga's case, the government has made extensive use of all three techniques.)

But unlike most victims, Filartiga refused to remain silent. Filartiga's abhorrence of violent methods of political control climaxed in the death of his son. Just before midnight on March 29, 1976, Joelito disappeared from his house in Asuncion, Paraguay. Two uniformed officers awoke his sister four hours later and brought her to the neighbor's home, where she discovered her brother, a beaten, slashed and electroshocked corpse. A police inspector told her it was a crime of passion; her brother had been found in bed by the neighbor's husband with his wife.

The husband was quickly ushered into the nearest police station where he "confessed" to the murder and has been imprisoned ever since. The wife "disappeared." Overwhelming evidence points to a government kidnapping. An autopsy by three doctors showed Joelito died from multiple cuts and burns often caused by beating and electroshock treatment. The police testimonies, in addition, contradict.

Stroessner's regime has its reasons for singling out Filartiga as a politically dangerous figure. As the sole physician to almost 40,000 peasants in the poorest country of the continent, Filartiga had attained the unofficial status of folk hero and rural leader. If anyone can mobilize revolt, he is in the most strategic position to do so. Though Filartiga does not aspire to organize politically subversive activity, his art publicizes the repercussions of Stroessner's reign on an international scale which seriously threatens the dictatorship's security.

Stroessner and the Filantigas weren't always on opposite sides of the fence. According to Chris Hager '66, who assisted Filartiga at the clinic last year, Filartiga's father was an influential industrialist, tobacco exporter, and personal friend of Stroessner's.

Sickened by his father's social circle and economic exploitations, Filartiga began to work with his father's laborers "out of curiosity." He recalls with satisfaction earning his first check for a solid week's labor. He soon after announced to his father that he intended to work full-time. Many long family battles followed. He eventually left and continued to work alongside laborers, leaving only to get a medical degree. In these early work years, "I learned compassion," he says.

Filartiga found his voice--a strident one--as well as his compassion in these years. His son's death taught him to use it. Joelito's one-and-a-half-hour torture session was recorded by the police, because they were so certain it would produce a confession. Filartiga has heard the tape, heard his son cry out that he had nothing to confess, listened while they accelerated the electric shocks, administered through his fingertips and genitals, until Joelito suddenly had a cardiac arrest and died.

Filartiga did not retreat to nurse his pain in private. Instead he laid his son's naked body, mauled and burnt, in state on the bloody mattress just as he found him. He encouraged hundreds to file by and see the evidence for themselves. Filartiga next distributed photographs of his son and the details of his death to the Paraguayan papers. Several newspapers printed the pictures and ran the full story. Finally, Filartiga filed a homicide suit against the police inspector and three other members of the force.

Despite his publicity campaign, the case was still unsettled when Filartiga arrived at Harvard three years later. The government has revoked the license of the lawyer representing Filartiga, then imprisoned him. Without a lawyer, Filartiga will undoubtedly lose the trial, and, according to Paraguayan law, the loser must pay the damages and the other's legal fees. Such payment will cost him the clinic.

In place of his son, Filartiga appears to have adopted a nation. He speaks of "my people," not as a politician would carelessly sling around the tired buzzword, but as a father who has expanded his household to embrace a country.

The Filartiga clinic is in fact home to the 30 to 40 people who line up on the patio daily. Filartiga's patients, some of whom travel several days to reach his clinic, suffer from malnutrition, anemia and diseases caused by inadequate hygiene. Lately many of his patients have arrived with kidney infections, rashes and appendicitis, which he believes are caused by the phosphate insecticide the government bought from the United States, a type banned in the United States. "Anything they throw away in other countries," Filartiga says, "is sold over here." Filartiga often returns to this metaphor of his nation as dumping grounds for the world, observing that Nazi criminals flocked to Paraguay for refuge following World War II. Somoza likewise retreated to Paraguay temporarily last summer. "My country is the trash heap of the world," Filartiga states calmly, but his thick lenses magnify the pain in his eyes.

The phosphate poisoning case is only one instance in which Filartiga holds the United States accountable for his nation's woes. Filartiga outlines the relationship between Paraguay and the United States in blunt, unsparing words: "The government of Paraguay was created in the United States State Department in the year 1959." Carter's human rights stance does not move Filartiga; he calls it a "make-up policy," which makes "the regime swallowable" and allows repression to continue.

But a deep faith in the "strength of people to free themselves" from oppression once they are educated has led him to travel to the United States whenever he can slip out of Paraguay--usually without a visa--and come speak to students. At Harvard, he told a hushed audience, "By liberating the people of Latin America, Americans will become free themselves."

Filartiga refuses to be affiliated with any party. Neither does he support a violent revolution. Human decency alone, he contends, dissolves dictatorships. More threatening to Stroessner than violent rebellion is caring. "I am serving the part of the country hated most--the people." Filartiga draws on dignity and faith to combat that hatred. Filartiga fosters dignity every day as he promotes health among the peasants. Faith in the human capacity to overcome a dark political world allows him to continue his practice and sketch 100 drawings a year--in the shadow of his son's memory.



Dr. Joel Filartiga and his daughter, Dolly

Trial History: Filartiga v. Pena-Irala

by Amanda Smith



On March 29, 1976, Joelito Filartiga, the seventeen-year-old son of Dr. Joel Filartiga, a prominent opponent of the Paraguayan government, was kidnapped and tortured to death by Americo Norberto Pena-Irala, then the Inspector General of Police in Ascension, Paraguay. The next day, Pena brought Dolly Filartiga, Joelito's sister, to Pena's home and confronted her with the body of her brother, which showed clearly the marks of severe torture. At that point, Inspector Pena made it perfectly clear that Joelito had been murdered in retaliation for his father's political activities, stating: "Here you have what you have been looking for, for so long and what you deserve...." Dr.

Filartiga attempted to seek justice in the courts of Paraguay for the murder of his son, but his attorney was arrested and threatened with death by Inspector Pena.

Ms. Filartiga, the victim's sister, fled Paraguay and sought political asylum in the United States in 1978. That same year, Inspector Pena also entered the United States under a visitor's visa. Pena overstayed his visa and apparently intended to remain indefinitely in the United States.

To Ms. Filartiga's horror, she learned of Pena's residence in the United States, she alerted the INS and, in addition, attempted to do something that had never been done successfully before-she filed a civil suit in federal court in New York seeking compensation and punitive damages against Pena for the torture and wrongful death of her brother. Ms. Filartiga's suit was unusual because she was suing for compensation for an act committed outside of the United States by a citizen of another country, against a citizen of that country. Previously, courts had refused to consider similar cases, finding that they had no proper jurisdiction to decide them.

What Ms. Filartiga and her lawyers did, however, was to make use of a very old federal statute called the Alien Tort Claims Act (or "ATCA"), which was passed by the First Congress of the United States. This Act states that "the district courts shall have original jurisdiction of any civil action by an alien for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States." The ATCA was originally used to allow aliens-persons who are not United States citizens-to recover in United States courts for crimes like piracy on the high seas. What Ms. Filartiga and her lawyers attempted to do was to "modernize this law by showing that, just as piracy was a crime against the "law of nations" when the ATCA was passed, torture was a crime against the "law of nations" in 1979. In May of 1979, the federal district court in New York-the trial court-considered the argument of Ms. Filartiga's lawyers that the court did have jurisdiction to take the case. The judge in that case noted the strength of Ms. Filartiga's argument that torture violates international law, but felt unable to make such a novel ruling. The trial court dismissed Ms. Filartiga's case on jurisdictional grounds on May 15, 1979.

Ms. Filartiga immediately appealed and on October 16, 1979, her case was heard by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the federal appellate court. Ms. Filartiga and her attorneys submitted evidence and declarations from international legal scholars about the nearly unanimous prohibition against torture among the nations of the world. The court considered these opinions and the various international treaties prohibiting torture and found that torture indeed did violate the law of nations as it exists in the world today. In its ruling of June 30, 1980, the court held that United States courts had jurisdiction over Ms. Filartiga's claims.

Because the appellate court had held that the trial court did have the power to hear Ms. Filartiga's case, the trial court reviewed the case again. Inspector Pena had been deported from the United States in 1979 because of visa violations, and a default judgment was entered against him in the amount of \$10,385,364. The result of the ruling in this landmark case was the creation of crucial new remedies for victims and survivors of torture in their quest to hold their torturers accountable for their crimes. As the law evolved from this critical starting point, it expanded to recognize within its ambit other violations of the law of nations, such as disappearances and arbitrary detention, as well as the liability of commanders.

