



# Mercy MOMENTS

## *Mercy Partners*

*opening the  
door to a world  
where the  
**healing,**  
**liberating** and  
**life-giving**  
mercy of  
God is  
experienced*

[www.mercypartners.org.au](http://www.mercypartners.org.au)

## Critical Engagement – the power of self-reflection and social engagement



**Much of the thinking and writing about Christian spirituality may give the impression that this has to do with distancing and escaping from the real world rather than engaging it. Thus spirituality is seen as flight from the world and its evils.**

A spirituality that seeks to escape the issues of our time is not a biblical spirituality, since the Bible reveals a God who engages the world for its salvation, liberation and healing. But a biblical spirituality rightly emphasises the value and importance of creating distance. Here particularly, the metaphor of desert comes into play. One leaves the city to enter the desert for a season of reflection and purgation. But having been in the desert one returns to the city empowered with a new vision and zeal. Having been transformed in the desert one re-enters society with a transformational vision.

Nouwen puts all of this in other words: 'No mystic can prevent himself (or herself) from becoming a social critic, since in self-reflection he (or she) will discover the roots of a sick society.'

If one is simply immersed in the world, one will also be influenced by the world. And it is not very likely that one will be able to engage the world in creative and renewing ways.

In order to change the world one must first be inspired by a vision of new possibilities, and the beginning of this is to disengage and to create distance. However one does this is what we call 'entering the desert'. To enter the desert is to enter into a reflective place. It is a place of solitude and prayer. It is a place where one seeks the face of God and the wisdom and ways of God. This place may become the place of encounter. It may become a place of self-confrontation ... this may open the windows for the healing of others and finding new ways to bless our world.

Christian service to the world is always one that seeks to affirm good and to transform what is evil. And so we become witnesses to the world, pointing to the God who seeks to make all things whole and new.

The challenge facing the Church is not to engage the world on the world's terms. The Church can only meaningfully engage the world when the Church itself has gone through its own purgation and lives the grace of God's healing goodness.

Source: *Hear the Heartbeat* by Charles R. Ringma with Henri Nouwen

### REFLECTION

- > How important is reflection in your life and your understanding of God's call to mercy and compassion?
- > 'The God who seeks to make all things whole and new' is a God of compassion, love and mercy. How is this reflected in the work of your ministry?
- > "The Church can only meaningfully engage the world when the Church itself has gone through its own purgation and lives the grace of God's healing goodness". Is this statement true in your experience?