

A close-up of a human hand, palm up, with a bright blue lightning bolt emanating from the fingertips. The background is dark, making the hand and the glowing energy stand out.

What if you had great power at your fingertips...

Millions of adults and children have watched the *Wizard of Oz*—it's a classic. If you are like me—your first encounter with the movie was a bit daunting. I remember hiding under a blanket for a good portion of it. Life outside of Kansas may have been enticing, but it was also intimidating and scary.

It wasn't until I became an adult that I recognized various life lessons tied to the characters. I began to see the influence of the scarecrow's wisdom, the tin man's love, and the lion's courage and fortitude.

But, beyond all those great qualities—I saw the **power of compassion** come alive in those characters when their priorities shifted to help someone in need; it was a great and life-changing power they all possessed. It was just hidden under the surface.

One of my favorite lines from the movie still echoes in my head. The great and powerful Oz says to Dorothy, **“You always had the power—everything you were looking for was right there with you all along!”**

“What if you had great power at your fingertips?”

Neuroscience's latest cutting edge research tells us compassion could be the key to improved, health, happiness, and longevity. Experts say that not only are we hard-wired to be kind, but it is essential for the survival of mankind.

Dr. James Doty, Professor of Neurosurgery at Stanford University tells us that as little as two weeks of compassion with intention has a positive physiological effect on the body. It can lower blood pressure, boost your immune response and increase your calmness.

Unfortunately, we are also told that, in our modern society, we often see a reduced capacity for empathy. When we perceive threats to our turf or opinions, compassion is the casualty. I feel this is often what we see in the nightly news.

Have we lost our compassion? Country music star Luke Byran's recent hit single poignantly states, "I believe if you just go by the nightly news—your faith in all mankind would be the first thing you lose."

Luke's hope filled chorus to that lyric is, "I believe most people are good."

After creating an initiative in 2017 – *Locks of Compassion* – I was inspired with hope! Yes, I too believe most people are good. Thousands of residents from Minnesota and visitors from around the globe (many visiting Mayo Clinic) united together by decorating padlocks that described their hopes and dreams to inspire compassion in our world.

These lock creations and experiences were shared on social media sights. We have those who view the posts from as far away as Australia. The locks were attached to a fence display that is now deemed a life-changing and cathartic piece of art. The book – *The City that Locked-In* – being published in 2018 details the project.



Compassion literally means "to suffer with." It calls us to provide help and create hope. At Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota, your compassion is life-changing for families in crisis, vulnerable adults and seniors, and children in need. I see your compassion change lives each and every day.

Last year your compassion changed the lives of over 6,400 individuals and over 3,900 households; 60% of those households had an annual income at or below \$25,000. Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota has seventeen programs that provide compassionate care for those residing in the twenty southernmost counties of Minnesota. It is the power of your compassionate generosity and support that makes the difference in our corner of the world.

"If we have no peace in this world, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." Those words of Mother Teresa guide us in what often feels like a tumultuous world. She provided compassion for people of all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and faith traditions; the same people we care for at Catholic Charities.

Compassion lives within you and me. At times, it may be hidden under the surface like those beloved characters in the Wizard of Oz; waiting patiently to come to life. **Compassion is the great power at your fingertips!**

When we encourage and nurture it within our children we are giving them a priceless gift; a gift that will bring them more joy than anything money can buy. Compassion won't just change the life of the person in need; it will change your life forever!

Your compassion for the poor we serve in southern Minnesota makes all the difference. Heartfelt thanks for your kind, life-changing and compassionate support of Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota. Visit www.ccsomn.org to learn more about services available for all)

Mary Alessio

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