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THE CHARTER FOR COMPASSION

The Charter for Compassion is the result of Karen Armstrong's 2008 TED Prize wish and made possible by the generous support of the Fetzer Institute. It will be unveiled to the world on **November 12, 2009**.

Why a Charter for Compassion?

The Golden Rule requires that we use empathy -- moral imagination -- to put ourselves in others' shoes. We should act toward them as we would want them to act toward us. We should refuse, under any circumstance, to carry out actions which would cause them harm.

The Charter, crafted by people all over the world and drafted by a multi-faith, multi-national council of thinkers and leaders, is a cry for a return to this central principle which is so often overlooked in our world. It reminds the faithful that in the past leading sages of all the major traditions insisted that the Golden Rule was the essence of religion, that everything else was "commentary," and that it should be practised "all day and every day." They insisted that any interpretation of scripture that led to hatred or disdain was illegitimate and that exegesis must issue in practical charity.

Like the Charter of Human Rights, this Charter for Compassion is a yardstick against which the laity as well as religious and secular leaders can measure their behaviour; it can empower congregations to demand a more compassionate teaching from pastors and preachers; it can mobilise youth, who have seen at a formative age what happens when

bigotry becomes rife in a society; it can make interfaith understanding a priority; inspire exegetes, scholars, educators and the media to explore the role compassion has played in the traditions, and ensure that compassion is a focal point in the curricula of schools, colleges and seminaries.

The Charter seeks to change the conversation so that compassion becomes a key word in public and private discourse, making it clear that any ideology that breeds hatred or contempt ~ be it religious or secular ~ has failed the test of our time.

We need everybody to participate ~ atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Muslims ~ everybody! Our polarized world needs to see compassion practically implicated ~ politically, socially and economically ~ and show that in our divided world, which so often stresses difference, compassion is something on which we can all agree.

About Karen Armstrong

Karen Armstrong is one of the most provocative, original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world. Armstrong is a former Roman Catholic nun who left a British convent to pursue a degree in modern literature at Oxford. She has written more than 20 books around the ideas of what Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common, and around their effect on world events, including the magisterial *A History of God and Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*. Her latest book is *The Case for God*. Her meditations on personal faith and religion (she calls herself a freelance monotheist) spark discussion — especially her take on fundamentalism, which she sees in a historical context, as an outgrowth of modern culture.

In February 2008, Karen Armstrong won the TED Prize and wished for help in creating, launching and propagating the Charter for Compassion.

A project of the TED Prize

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design. It is an annual conference which brings together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes). TED.com makes the best talks and performances, the ideas worth spreading, from TED available to the public, for free.

The [TED Prize](#) is designed to leverage the TED Community's exceptional array of talent and resources. It is awarded annually to three exceptional individuals who each receive \$100,000 and, much more important, the granting of "One Wish to Change the World."

Made possible by the Fetzer Institute

A private operating foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the [Fetzer Institute](#) engages with people and projects around the world to help bring the power of love, forgiveness and compassion to the center individual and community life. The Institute's work rests on a deep conviction that each of us has power to transform the world by strengthening the connection between the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of service and action. While the Fetzer Institute is not a religious organization, it honors and learns from a variety of spiritual traditions.

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