



Mercy Global Action: Presence of/with/to God

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The pandemic forced us to stop. It forced us to be still, to take stock, and to reflect. Without the routine busyness of our normal lives, we could see the poor and the sick, and the marginalized and the oppressed with new eyes. Covid-19 highlighted systemic injustices, inequality, and marginalization but is also drew us, individually and collectively, into the presence of God. Though the pandemic overwhelmed us, we can hear the presence of God- in loss, hope, and the new normal- calling us to build back better.

We each lost something as Covid-19 touched our lives. Some losses were physical: jobs, homes, health, or life itself. Intangible losses gave rise to the emotional strain we all experienced as a result of the pandemic. Without the freedom to move, to be near our loved ones, or to feel safe and secure, we struggled to cope. Additionally, we experienced these losses in our isolation, which is a loss in itself. Yet, the experience of loss connected us all. Everyone everywhere shared this experience together, and this gave us an unprecedented common context on a global scale.

The global reality of the pandemic calls us to be present to all of humanity and Earth as this crisis highlighted existing injustices, systemic inequalities, and oppression. Housing, violence, migration, food and water, and our political institutions all showed blatant inequalities as Covid-19 swept across the globe. In the pandemic's light, we see how far we still must go in the ongoing struggle from a just and equitable society. The reality can overwhelm us as we bear witness to profits being valued over people and Earth.

Our presence to the cry of the oppressed under the pressure of our common experience of the pandemic generated momentum for change. The momentum, cultivated through the individual and communal integration of our Covid-19 experience, comes with a sense of urgency. We must not lose our momentum and the political will to act in this time of loss. We must not go through all this suffering only to return to the old normal.

We can already glimpse the new normal in the simple and heroic actions of essential workers and average people responding to Covid-19. The "pandemic of kindness" erupted with courage, artistic expression, creativity, and generosity. The "pandemic of kindness" is a testament to human resilience and hope. It is an outpouring of compassion and solidarity, which we can evolve into if we stay present to the movement.

While there is much to do across the spectrum of advocacy, from grassroots to the global stage, honoring the "pandemic of kindness" helps enliven and encourage us. The importance of holding this positive movement cannot be understated because just as we are present to God in the face of suffering and loss, we are also present in acts of compassion and solidarity. To keep the momentum of change moving towards a new normal, we must reflect on the presence of God in the kind actions of others.

The contrast of the Covid-19 pandemic and the "pandemic of kindness" recalls Mercy's long tradition of serving the sick, most notably our first sisters' response to the cholera epidemic in

1832. Catherine's constant commitment to the sick combined contemplation and action, holding the presence of God and the presence to those in need of mercy together. Catherine's experience of God's presence in all whom she served constantly refreshed her sense of call to be mercy in a suffering world.

Our continued call to follow in Catherine's footsteps and be mercy in the world today, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, presents us with an opportunity. Working to answer God's call to serve, we become co-creators with God. That spirit of co-creation with God now finds voice in the work before us: to form a just society. The call to seek justice and to be mercy can guide of transition to a new normal.

It is imperative now to ensure that no one is left behind as the world turns its focus to recovering physically, economically, and socially from Covid-19. We must elevate the voices of the marginalized, oppressed, and Earth to ensure a more equitable and sustainable future. It is important to incorporate our presence to God into the work of recovery because this will center our focus on upholding the inherent dignity of all people and the planet. Keeping dignity at the core of our work as a Mercy Family will help us do more than recover; it will ensure that we build back better.