

*Mercy as a Value by Patricia Smith RSM.*

Mercy is a mode of relationship, not a momentary sporadic feeling. It is, rather, a habit of mind and heart, a way of organizing and interpreting the world. It is an enduring approach to the world. And, like any relationship, it is a two-way street. And a power. This is the exciting, challenging part. Mercy is only what it is when it is effective — when it survives against great odds and when it empowers all who come within its orbit of care. Because mercy opposes injustice and whatever is degrading, it is likely to involve danger. Conflict is inevitable, struggle enduring. Courage is needed, as never before, in our time.

Wounded (but not destroyed) by the suffering of others. If Mercy is com-passion, or “suffering with,” it is also comfort, or “standing strong with.” An inner-city minister in Baltimore put it beautifully: “Mercy is justice in tears.” Propelled to Action. Propelled is a very active verb. It says that mercy is God’s empowering presence in the world, a presence known only in and through those who act in God’s merciful name. What needs propel us and our organizations today? What wounds us?

Now. The God of mercy does not wait to care for us at the end of our lives or at the end of time. This God cares for us during all time. Made in this God’s image, we are exhorted by Mother Jones: “Pray for the dead, but fight like hell for the living.” This means practical action. Now.