

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Thank you to the Mercy Global Action COVID-19 Response Task Force!

We are pleased to be able to share that we now have “Hope In a Time of Pandemic” translated into Spanish. We have received wonderful feedback on this publication and are delighted Mercy Sisters and Associates around the Mercy World are reflecting on this resource.

It is timely to thank the Mercy Global Action COVID 19 Response Task Force. The task force met fortnightly for several months and during that time worked intensely to collect stories from the Mercy World, reflect on the impact of COVID-19 around the Mercy World and significantly, make recommendations for action. The team worked with great passion and energy and we are most grateful for their unique contribution to Global Action for Mercy International Association.

Special thanks to the following members of the Task Force:

Bridget Crisp rsm	Aotearoa New Zealand	Angela Reed rsm	Mercy Global Action
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'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - The Pandemic of Kindness

As we celebrate Mercy Day 2020, we appreciate the love and kindness that has been so evident throughout the Mercy World and beyond during this time of pandemic. Amidst the grief and loss, the illnesses and anxieties, the lockdowns and uncertainties, the Mercy World has remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthening relationships and to standing in solidarity with Earth and people, especially those most marginalised.

The Inspiration of Catherine McAuley

MGA's recent publication, 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic,' has illustrated that amidst pain and suffering, there is human capacity for transformation, resilience, kindness and creativity. Through the inspiration of our foundress Catherine McAuley, the Mercy World has responded to this global crisis with compassion, hope and resilience. This has been part of the Mercy story since Catherine first responded to the struggles in her own life.

Catherine experienced the death of her parents and siblings at a young age and despite the hardships, lovingly cared for her sister's children. She was faithful regardless of the efforts to convert her from Catholicism and she opened the House of Mercy despite opposition. We recall the works of Mercy undertaken by Catherine and her companions during the Cholera Epidemic and are motivated by Catherine's spirit of Mercy. In 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic', a Sister from Newfoundland reflects:

'Catherine McAuley's spirit of mercy and compassion and her great courage were sources of my deep desire to continue my hospital ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic....Sometimes, besides the nurses and doctors, I am the only face the patients see.'

Renewing and Strengthening Relationships

At the heart of the Mercy World has been a renewing and strengthening of relationships. Amidst the severe health crisis and huge disruption to our lives, the value of connecting and caring for others has been paramount. Even though we are forced to socially distance, the Mercy World has embraced technology in a new way, engaging in phone calls, zoom meetings and webinars across the world.

Mercy Sister from the United Kingdom states:

'The future seems so much more uncertain and, as an aging community, we sometimes feel there is very little we can physically contribute, but technology has given us a window that is enabling us to communicate, share with and accompany others in a way that we have never thought of before'

Gratitude for Essential Workers

One way in which the Mercy World has accompanied others is through showing gratitude to essential workers. People around the Mercy World have given tribute to essential workers in many ways, including sending flowers, forming a guard of honour and applauding key workers in praise of their service. Images of Mercy communities thanking essential workers are symbolic of the value placed on indispensable work. A Mercy Sister from Guyana states:

'A global pandemic can only be countered by a response that is grounded in global contemplation. Among the fruits of our contemplation are wisdom, energy, new directions, new language, courage and new hope.'

Through kindness, prayer and contemplation the Mercy World makes a stand amidst and in response to this global pandemic.

**HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC**
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

WE STAND...



1. For ensuring that no one is left behind:
"We are all in this together."
2. For human and Earth rights, and for systems which uphold the dignity and protection of our common home.
3. For an inclusive response to the impacts of the pandemic that builds a sustainable future benefiting all.
4. With all who face discrimination and violence.
5. For the rights of women and girls, and for gender-responsive approaches to a transformative future.
6. For the well-being of families in all their forms.
7. For safeguarding the dignity of all those who are dying and have died during the pandemic.
8. With all those grieving the loss of loved ones.
9. With those who have lost their livelihoods and all who feel vulnerable during these uncertain times.
10. For the integrity and unity of all earth systems and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption in light of the lessons learned during lockdown.
11. For human rights and the values of the Common Good which enable all individuals to have the food, water, shelter, clothing and health care required to live with dignity.
12. For the development of collaborative relationships between central government, local governments and civil society that secures the social protection needs of ALL people within jurisdictions.
13. For just and merciful leadership at all levels.



WHAT ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO, AND WHERE DO YOU STAND?

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue
Spotlight - Political Institutions

COVID-19 has accelerated unprecedented change. The need for just and merciful leadership has never been more urgent than in the midst of this unfolding crisis. The stories and experiences featured in the Mercy Global Action COVID-19 Response Task Force report have revealed the importance of leaders and political institutions that are grounded in the realities of people and Earth and are responsive to the range of health, economic and social distress caused by COVID-19.

What has been revealed in terms of political institutions?

• An expansion of political power, and a risk of rising authoritarianism

To tackle the COVID-19 crisis, and given the magnitude of its human, social and economic impacts, governments around the world have taken on extraordinary powers which limit people's ability to move freely or to assemble in large groups. People around the world have sacrificed their individual freedoms to benefit collective public health outcomes.

Indeed, international human rights law permits restrictions on liberty in times of national emergency that are necessary and proportionate.

The health crisis will eventually recede but autocratic governments' dangerous expansion of power may be one of the pandemic's most enduring legacies. It is now paramount for people around the world to care not only about the health of the individuals around us but for the health of our government institutions as well. In order to achieve the structural transformation necessary to address inequalities, to reach excluded and marginalized people and to protect the environment, we will need strong and inclusive democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of all people and the planet.



HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

**ISSUE SPOTLIGHT:
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

 <p>THE PANDEMIC HAS LED TO AN EXPANSION OF POLITICAL POWER AND EMBOLDENED AUTHORITARIANS</p>	 <p>COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY REQUIRES GLOBAL COOPERATION AND COMPASSIONATE, BOLD POLICIES</p>
<p>Censorship, misinformation and hate speech have led to the spread of COVID-19, violence, and public distrust of scientific expertise</p>	<p>In the short-term, government policies will have immediate impacts on public health, social inclusion and peoples' wellbeing</p>
<p>Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put racial and ethnic minority groups at higher risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19</p>	<p>In the long-term, governments need to show leadership by investing in people and planet to reduce inequalities and to be more resilient and sustainable</p>
<p>We need to protect and promote strong and inclusive democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of all people and the planet</p>	<p>We must encourage our governments to seize this unique opportunity to take bold steps to steer the world towards a profound systemic transformation</p>



• A need for international cooperation and bold, compassionate response and recovery

International cooperation is, and will continue to be, vital for sharing expertise, medicine, equipment, research and development particularly in the provision of treatment and assistance to affected people and in the search for a vaccine. Cooperation will also be essential to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic. Countries that accelerate their efforts to implement their existing human rights and sustainable development commitments will be better placed to recover from the human and economic devastation caused by COVID-19.

In the short-term, government interventions will have immediate impacts on public health, social inclusion and the wellbeing of people experiencing socio-economic stress and uncertainty. In the long-term, governments need to show leadership and political will by investing in universal health, social protection, and environmental policies, not only in times of crisis, but also in order to be more resilient to future disasters. Governments must make these policies inclusive and non-discriminatory in ways that give special attention to protecting the lives and livelihoods of at-risk and marginalized groups. It is up to governments to lead with strong political will and to mobilize resources to invest in policies and institutions that can turn the tide on inequality.

Click [here](#) to access the complete article and learn more about our call to action.

Spread the Word across your own social media platforms by [sharing](#) our infographic.



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020 - In Solidarity with Internally Displaced Persons

On 27 September, 2020, the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), Pope Francis called on the faithful to understand more deeply the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The theme this year, “Forced like Jesus Christ to Flee,” recalls the flight into Egypt, when “the child Jesus experienced with his parents the tragic fate of the displaced and refugees, which is marked by fear, uncertainty and unease. Unfortunately, in our own times, millions of families can identify with this sad reality.”

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, at the end of 2019, some 50.8 million people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or due to sudden or slow-onset natural disasters. Extractive development and urban renewal projects can also cause displacement on a large scale. Increasingly, many IDPs live in situations of protracted displacement. Unlike refugees, who cross a border to find safety, IDPs stay within their own countries. They often move to areas where it is difficult to deliver humanitarian assistance and as a result, IDPs are among the most vulnerable in the world.

Even though they are often displaced in the same way, and for the same reasons as refugees, IDPs are not included within the international system of protection provided for by international refugee law. The recognition that a State has the primary obligation to protect all its citizens in all circumstances, coupled with respect for State sovereignty by the international community, has resulted in the absence of an internationally legally-binding protection framework and definition of internal displacement. The primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of IDPs and for providing them with humanitarian assistance remains with their national government even if that government is not always willing or able to fulfil its obligations. The difficulty of the international community to intervene and the lack of interest by the media and wider society have sometimes resulted in IDPs being ‘forgotten’, increasing their vulnerability and preventing their needs from being sufficiently recognized or met.





The vulnerabilities experienced by IDPs have been further heightened by movement restrictions and the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. IDPs are more at risk of contracting COVID-19 because of cramped living conditions, poor nutrition, limited access to sanitation, health care and reliable information. They also often lack support networks and face language barriers and other social and cultural obstacles. Many IDPs have been disproportionately affected by the economic repercussions of lockdown measures, given their already precarious circumstances and heavy dependence on casual labour and/or external support (from host communities, authorities and humanitarian organizations) to meet their basic needs. As such, they will continue to be even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence.

In his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis asks us to reflect on the compassion of the Good Samaritan and to take risks in order to be close to those whose wounds need binding up in our day. Building upon his call in Message for WDMR in 2018, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees, Pope Francis invites us “To know in order to understand; To be close in order serve; To listen in order to be reconciled; To share in order to grow; and To involve in order to promote.” It is up to all of us to ensure that internally displaced persons are not made to be invisible, that their needs are met, their rights protected and promoted, and their contributions recognized and valued. In the conclusion of his message, Pope Francis prays, “May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.”





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

Season of Creation and Global Youth Climate Action

As the Season of Creation comes to an end and the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi approaches, the Mercy World celebrates the beauty, wisdom and generosity of all Creation. The theme of the 2020 Season of Creation is ‘Jubilee for the Earth: New rhythms, new hope’, highlighting the radical new ways of living with Creation which are needed post-pandemic. During this time of renewal, we express gratitude, love and a commitment to care for all living things. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of our shared nature and the interconnectedness of Earth and people. Weak, unsustainable and exploitative relationships between our healthcare systems, food production systems, transportation systems and socio-economic and political structures have been revealed. We must hear the cries of the Earth and those rendered poor and echo Pope Francis’ call to “strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family”.

As the pace of life slowed at the beginning of lockdown, many found a new sense of wonder, appreciation and escapism in the flourishing of the natural world. Yet, greenhouse gas emissions keep rising, extractive industries continue to degrade the land and pollute rivers, forests are burning and continue to be cut down at alarming rates. Our overproduction and overconsumption of natural resources has led us into an ‘ecological debt’. Having an ecological and caring perspective of our Common Home is vital to reverse the ‘ecological debt’ and reaffirm a commitment to environmental justice. We must promote relationships with Creation which are not built around power, profit and ownership. Wealth must be understood as a planet rich in biodiversity; where our relationships with our neighbours are honoured; where we are present within the reality of our Common Home; where the urgency of addressing the climate crisis is acknowledged. Failure to understand this perspective of wealth enables the exploitation of Earth and people in search of profits.

Youth worldwide empathise with and recognise climate change for the existential threat it poses to our Common Home and future generations. Youth continue to strike for climate action, in line with pandemic safety recommendations.

Those unable to take to the streets have turned to digital activism, organising group Zoom calls and storming social media to raise awareness of the exploitative nature of the fossil fuel sector. Their resilience in adapting and continuing their fight for climate action, encompasses Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Sí* for “swift and unified global action”.



Within Mercy International Association- Global Action's recent publication "Hope in a Time of Pandemic: Responding to COVID-19 Through a Mercy Lens", a Mercy Student from the United States reflected,

"Despite the past actions of generations, their current attitudes and the ongoing global pandemic, the lessons from the global response to it can and must also be applied to the climate crisis... As young people, we are asking older generations to begin to step up as we are now stepping up for you. Take the initiative, spare lives and act for the wellbeing of our shared planet. In order to fight coronavirus, we all have to be as healthy as possible. In order to fight the climate crisis, our Earth must be similarly healthy, and its inhabitants prepared to cultivate a united front against environmental injustice and exploitation."

The International Youth Climate Podcast stresses the importance of adapting the market place to produce items which last for a lifetime and encourages us all to recycle, compost and demand a no waste lifestyle. Human waste disrupts both wildlife and sea life. We must be even more conscious of the impact of our waste during this time of pandemic, as the use of masks, disposal gloves and sanitary wipes have become part of our daily lives. These items are essential to stop people from contracting or spreading COVID-19. However, they are not recyclable or biodegradable and therefore, we must try to be more resourceful and make, wash, and reuse our own face covering to help reduce waste.

During lockdown, young people worldwide started online trends upcycling old clothes into masks and sharing them across their social media. Reducing our waste decreases pollution, impedes the growth of garbage in our oceans, prevents habitat loss and protects all of Creation. Upcycling, reusability and sustainability may seem like a new movement to many young people but it is "a concept that roots from indigenous traditions". Youth embodying the traditions of indigenous communities gives us hope for the future of our Common Home, as it is from indigenous wisdom that we understand that the land does not belong to anyone and humans are but caretakers of it.



We cannot alone count on the will and generosity of youth striking for the future. Climate action must have an intergenerational and comprehensive approach addressing biodiversity, inequalities, systemic power imbalances, aggressive industrialisation and most importantly, urge ambitious political will. As Pope Francis stated in his September 2nd General Audience:

"One does not emerge from a crisis the same as before. The pandemic is a crisis. We emerge from a crisis either better or worse than before. It is up to us to choose. And solidarity is, indeed, a way of coming out of the crisis better, not with superficial changes."

Points for Reflection:

- How can we continue to educate ourselves and each other about the ecological crises facing us and threatening life as we know it?
- How can we expand our ecological consciousness? What are some of the ways we continue to live unconscious of or unconcerned about waste, pollution, a "throw away culture," overuse of resources, inequality and poverty?

Mercy World's Call to Action:

- Continue to grow our ecological consciousness of the gift of Creation and the interconnectedness of our Common Home.
- Listen to the wisdom of faith and traditional knowledge, holding Earth as sacred.
- Lift up the voices of the youth and join them in encouraging the radical change that is needed to protect our planet.
- Encourage world leaders to strengthen multilateralism and be guided by faith and science to promote environmental integrity, respect for human rights and dignity, inclusivity, gender-responsivity, and justice.

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - Food and Water

COVID-19 has revealed innumerable inequalities and deeply rooted systemic injustices in areas such as physical and mental health, mobility, political institutions, and housing. Two vulnerable areas most vital to the survival of people and Earth are the supply of food and water. Stories featured in Mercy Global Action's COVID-19 Response Task Force report '[Hope in a Time of Pandemic – Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens](#)' reveal both the challenges and resilience of communities experiencing water shortages and food insecurity during the Pandemic.

What has been revealed in terms of food and water?

- Collapse of food production and supply systems has affected food security globally**

COVID-19 has threatened the food security and nutrition of many families and communities across the globe. As families have lost their economic livelihoods, they are unable to support themselves and their children resulting in lack of access to essential needs and assistance. While school closures have been put in place as mitigation measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, many children do not have access to health programs, school meals and other supports that were previously accessible to them.

On September 29th the United Nations will commemorate the first ever International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste. Sister, Associates and Partners in Mercy have mobilized to ensure that families and children receive proper nutrition in the face of food insecurity.

- Safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services are essential to combating COVID-19 and the spread of infection**

While communities are being told to wash their hands to combat the spread of infection, COVID-19 has highlighted the inequitable access and availability of safe water and sanitation. Many individuals have experienced water inaccessibility as a result of loss of their economic livelihoods. And yet, many women and girls across the globe bear the burden with collection of water in their communities, placing them at greater risk of infection, risking "stay at home" orders and gender based violence due to lack of adequate water infrastructure. Access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene is crucial for protection against COVID-19, achieving gender equality, and reducing violence against women.

Approximately 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lack basic hand washing facilities.

We also must keep in mind those in indigenous communities, those experiencing homelessness, those in aged-care facilities, migrants and refugees who do not have access to clean water and sanitation. Proper access to adequate water and sanitation services are not only lacking in households, but in education and healthcare facilities.

Click [here](#) to access the complete article and learn more about our call to action.

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HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: FOOD AND WATER

COLLAPSE OF FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY

COVID-19 has threatened the food security and nutrition of many families and communities across the globe. As families have lost their economic livelihoods, they are unable to support themselves and their children resulting in lack of access to essential needs and assistance.

FOOD SECURITY

Sisters, Associates and Partners in Mercy have mobilized to ensure that families and children receive proper nutrition in the face of food insecurity. They have designated food and nutrition as essential, while providing the necessary assistance to vulnerable groups.

LACK OF ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES DURING COVID-19

Approximately 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lack basic hand washing facilities. COVID-19 has highlighted the inequitable access and availability of safe water and sanitation.

HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION

The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably linked to many other human rights, including physical and mental health, and the right to life and human dignity.

CALL TO ACTION

- **Advocate for the Right to Food**, by bolstering agricultural and food systems with long-term sustainability goals.
- **Promote the Human Right to Water and Sanitation (HRWS)** in order to change systemic injustices that prevent water being accessible to all. Existing injustices include: the privatization of water, poor water governance, unsustainable agricultural practices and gender inequality.

AT THE UNITED NATIONS THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...



International Day of Peace

By Julia Morisi (MELF 2019-2020)

Every year, September 21 marks International Day of Peace. Peace can mean many things, and in years past, the International Day has been focused on climate action for peace, human rights, and education, to name a few. This year, the theme is Shaping Peace Together. People around the world are facing a common enemy—the Corona Virus, so September 21 intends to mark a day of solidarity, peace, and ceasefire across borders.

I see this theme of Shaping Peace Together as vastly relevant and important in my own context, the United States. Currently in the United States, we are racked with violence and division. And further, we are rapidly approaching a presidential election. In addition to candidate versus candidate, there is a feeling of neighbor versus neighbor. Shaping peace together poses many challenges, but it is so deeply needed, not simply from governing bodies, but from communities and individuals. While new policies, disarmament, ceasefires, and other peacemaking efforts are vital around the world, peace is not simply achieved on these governmental, national, and global measures. In many ways, peacemaking is embedded deep in the community, in the neighborly exchanges, in the grassroots.

Peace is an attitude, a value, a decision. Peace is made as a personal choice and an interpersonal gesture—it takes an intentional show of care and Mercy to self and others. The common and everyday acts of Mercy and hospitality are the true work of peacemaking. Sometimes the most profound gesture of peace is simultaneously the humblest. Maya Angelou stated this idea most eloquently in her poem recited during the 1993 presidential inauguration. Angelou tells us how to be a peacemaker each and every morning. She says,

*“Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.”*

On the outset of new political leadership, Angelou provided this wisdom and displayed this show of Mercy. Decades later, Angelou's advice greets us at a similar time of change and chance. Without commonplace grace, peacebuilding is just an ideal.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Global Civil Society Report 2020 on the 2030 Agenda and the SDG's:

Shifting policies for systemic change-Lessons from the global COVID-19 crisis



Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2020



Race & Justice in World Affairs
World Denver Speaker Series



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 10 October - World Mental Health Day
- 10 October - World Migratory Bird Day
- 11 October - International Day of the Girl Child
- 13 October - International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction
- 15 October - International Day of Rural Women
- 16 October - World Food Day
- 17 October - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 24 October - United Nations Day
- 31 October - World Cities Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe