

# MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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## GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

### *An Update on the Work of Mercy Global Action*

It is often stated that critical junctures or interruptions create opportunities for organisations, communities and other configurations to look at things with new eyes. The COVID-19 has certainly provided an interruption for Mercy Global Action (MGA) to look at its work in new ways. Located in New York City, where COVID-19 has caused the city to lockdown, the MGA office is closed, since the building in which we are housed is no longer accessible. This does not mean however, that the work of MGA has ceased. Instead, we find ourselves called to adapt and adopt new ways of working and perhaps even new ways of seeing.

Whilst working from home, Colleen Swain continues to work in her capacity as the Leadership Development and Advocacy Associate, as does Sr Mandy Carrier in her internship. For personal reasons I needed to travel home to Australia and so find myself working now from Melbourne, until travel restrictions are lifted. This is not a scenario that our office had envisaged when planning for 2020, however like many organisations we are required to adapt. There are many dimensions of our work that have required creative thinking and adaptation, often with very little notice.

[Click here to read further on the MercyWorld Website....](#)





# THEMATIC AREAS

## DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- *Emissions Decreasing Amid COVID-19 Pandemic*

There has been one small ray of light during this COVID-19 pandemic. As people practice healthy habits of social distancing and limiting travel, there has been a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>-- two pollutants that contribute to global warming. Amid the emerging concerns for a post-pandemic economic downturn, we also have a unique opportunity to plan for a greener future. If States take smart steps while rebuilding their economies, the current reduction in pollution can become the first step towards turning the tide in the climate crisis.

According to the Carbon Brief's analysis of China's emissions for the month of February 2020, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 18% lower and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 36% lower than previous years (emissions in China typically drop for a week as the country celebrates the Lunar New year). [1] The rate of emissions has been slow to rebound as the country recovers from COVID-19 due mostly to reduced demand for power (consumed by factories), aviation, and car use. The reduction in demand for power is an important contributing factor due to many plants running on fossil fuels. [2]



The positive turn to a more sustainable future may not last long after the quarantine lifts, despite the positive effects of lower emissions on our environment. Many States are already enacting a variety of stimulus plans to bolster their economies. We do not yet know how governments will use relief funds. Many could go towards bailing out industries such as aviation, steel, and construction. Or we could reach out to our governments and insist that this time of lowered interest rates is the perfect opportunity to invest in sustainable technology and green-job training. [3]

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, alluded to the global opportunity at hand as he addressed the looming economic troubles we can expect in COVID-19's aftermath. In his opening remarks to the G20 meeting, Guterres stated that it is critical to, "work together now to set the stage for a recovery that builds a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable economy, guided by our shared promise — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." [4] We will have to rebuild our structures just as we would if COVID-19 had been an extreme weather event. It will be a challenge for States, and for our global community, but now is the time to set clear intentions for the green future we envision.

While the United Nations COP26 in Glasgow has been postponed to 2021, the global community has more time to raise ambitions and action plans for the Paris Agreement to come into force. Mercy Global Action will continue to ensure care for the Earth through the protection of human rights, advocate on behalf of local and indigenous communities, oppose the misuse of resources including extractivism, encourage ecosystem based approaches and address the loss and damage of biodiversity.





# Easter Reflection Guide

Amid our global quarantine, Lent draws to a close and we will pass through Holy Week into the Easter season; our time of resurrection and rejoicing. Resurrection does not simply mean a return to the way things have been, but rather a dramatic entrance into a new life.

Preparing for this movement, the Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries prepared an [Easter reflection guide](#) focusing on our personal response to the Amazonian Synod and our global environmental crisis.

[5] We must examine the part we play in both the degradation of Earth and Earth's restoration. Sr. Roselei Bertoldo IHM wrote that the victims of our current economic systems are the crucified of our world today. Through our lifestyle and our purchases, have we contributed to this ongoing crucifixion? We are Mercy and we have been "founded on Calvary there to serve a crucified redeemer." We serve the crucified of our day and can work towards our personal and global resurrection, even during quarantine, by:

- Examining the carbon and justice impact of the goods we buy.
- Switching our households and transportation needs to sustainable energy.
- Advocating for sustainable uses of our local and national stimulus packages.
- Take part in citizen science projects such as [Earth Challenge](#) to "monitor and mitigate threats to our environment."
- Take a look at [Mercy Service Now](#) and the [Colors Challenge](#) to help build a culture of love.
- Sign up here to take part in [Mercy Earth Challenge](#).

## Footnotes Page 2 & 3:

[1] Myllyvirta, Lauri. "Analysis: Coronavirus Temporarily Reduced China's CO2 Emissions by a Quarter." Carbon Brief: Clear on Climate. 19 February - 30 March 2020. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-coronavirus-has-temporarily-reduced-chinas-co2-emissions-by-a-quarter>

[2] Ibid

[3] Florizone, Richard. "Three Ways the Coronavirus is Shaping Sustainable Development." IISD. <https://www.iisd.org/library/coronavirus-shaping-sustainable-development>

[4] Guterres, António. "Secretary-General Urges G20 Countries to Suppress COVID-19 Transmission, Keep Households Afloat, amid Pandemic's 'Human Crisis'." 26 March 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20024.doc.htm>

[5] "Easter with an Amazonian Face." The Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries. 2020 <https://justresponse.faith/easter-amazonian-face-pdf>



# THEMATIC AREAS

## DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

### • Human Right to Adequate Housing: Contemplation to Action

# 1

#### Experience

Think back on your own experience. Have you, or anyone you know, ever lacked adequate housing? Is there a time where you spoke or worked with someone experiencing homelessness? Or take a moment to reflect on a time when you were grateful for your shelter.

What do you feel when you enter these memories?

# 2

#### Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer as you reflect on Isaiah 58:6-8.

What touches you in the reading?

What can we learn from scripture about the universal right to adequate housing?

# 3

#### Analyze

Research current concerns about homelessness, especially in light of the Corona pandemic. What is your community doing to address social distancing and hygiene needs for people experiencing homelessness? Consider how access to adequate housing affects women, cities, health, or any other housing related topic to which you feel drawn.

# 4

#### Action

As a result of this reflection, what actions can you take? What can you address in your local area, community, or country? Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the infographic inspire you to action?

Share what you have learned through research and prayer.

**MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION**

Mercy Global Action Affirms the **UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 11**

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

1 in 4 urban residents live in slum like conditions.

**\$1.90/DAY**

More than 200 million people, or 10% of the world population, live in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90/day) and struggle to fulfil the most basic needs.

A house must include:  
Security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, accessibility, proper location, and cultural adequacy.

**HOUSING INEQUALITY**

Inequality is a big concern for meeting Sustainable Development Goals linked to the right to adequate housing. Over 1 billion people live in slums and this number keeps rising.

23% of the global population lacks adequate housing.

**ACCESS TO WATER**

2 billion people do not have access to clean water and sanitation.

**A HUMAN RIGHT**

The right to adequate housing must be interpreted broadly and include:

- protections against evictions, destruction and demolition of one's homes
- free to choose one's residence, or to move
- Security of tenure
- housing, land and property restitution
- equal and non-discriminatory access to housing.

**1.8 BILLION**

The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing estimates that 1.8 billion people across the globe lack adequate housing.

**ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES**

- Review recommendations that the United Nations Special Rapporteur has made to your country.
- Review guidelines and assess your government's SDG efforts.
- Communicate with experts to denounce systemic violations or deprivations.
- Contact your representatives.
- Share this infographic across your social media!

Download and share the [interactive PDF here](#).

Download and share the [PNG version here](#).



# THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Mercy Global Action Advocates for Right to Adequate Housing and Clean Water and Sanitation During COVID-19 Pandemic*

The preventative measures for the COVID-19 pandemic recommended by the World Health Organization are simple and easy to remember. Cough and sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands with soapy water for twenty seconds, practice social distancing and stay home. These simple precautions can help slow the spread of the virus and keep individuals and communities healthy, but they are not simple for many people around the world who live without adequate housing and access to water and sanitation.

About 1.8 billion people around the world lack adequate housing.[1] The right to adequate housing is fundamental for the enjoyment of other human rights. In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, adequate housing is a matter of life and death. It is important to realize that protecting the health and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness, or living in informal settlements and shelters, will also help flatten the curve of COVID-19. [2] We must ensure that no one gets left behind in this crisis. Social inequalities lead to a disproportionate impact. Low-income workers cannot take time off from work and are often engaged in jobs that are more likely to expose them to the virus: cleaners, care givers, grocery store employees and others. Essential household items are now difficult to purchase. Some people have stockpiled basic goods, while many live paycheck to paycheck and cannot buy more than a few days' supplies at a time. The financial crisis developing as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis will greatly impact people without savings.



One in five adults have reported being laid off during the pandemic.[3] The evolving economic reality has led to a call for social protections from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha. She has stated:

“I am urging States to take extraordinary measures to secure the right to housing for all to protect against the pandemic. Good practices are emerging in a few States, including: Moratoriums on evictions due to rental and mortgage arrears; deferrals of mortgage payments for those affected by the virus; extension of winter moratoriums on forced evictions of informal settlements; and increased access to sanitation and emergency shelter spaces for homeless people.” [4]

While UN Member States adopt measures to protect their economies, Farha also warns about the consequences of stimulus packages. She warns against creating an environment that favors corporations to control the housing markets and further financialize housing, as was the case after the 2008 global financial crisis. [5] In solidarity, Mercy Global Action must advocate for policies and best practices that are accessible to all, including equal access to the right to adequate housing and the right to water and sanitation.



Hand washing is a key step to preventing the spread of the virus, yet all do not enjoy that human right. Today, 2.2 billion people lack access to water and sanitation. [6] More people experience water inaccessibility as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19 as many no longer have the funds to pay for their utilities; 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. In response to the need for sanitation best practices, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, Leo Heller, called for protections against the shut off of water and for free water to be provided to those lacking access to sanitation during this crisis. [7]

There are many examples of the services provided by Catherine McAuley and our Global Mercy community during times of struggle: the cholera epidemic, the Crimean War, the stories of sisters going on their knees from one hospital bed to the next. COVID-19 is not like the diseases and health crises faced by Mercy World in the past. Our first sisters worked tirelessly in poor conditions, tending to the sick, injured, and abandoned. As a result, many became ill themselves. Catherine wrote with deep sadness of the numbers of Sisters lost in the early years and even contracted an illness herself- a cough she said had taken up “permanent residence” and eventually led to her own death. We may not be the ones to respond to the physical needs today in the face of such a highly communicable virus. Though, Catherine’s words and example can guide our response to the call of our time. She wrote in the Original Rule of the Community:

Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him, has in all ages of the Church excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and dying poor, as in them they regarded the person of our divine Master... [8]

Quarantine and self-isolation has affected everyone across the world. In our current isolation, people are seeking each other for support in many forms. Many are reaching out to form communities across the world through prayer, shared resources, education and much more. Some have launched charitable projects to feed and shelter those in need, and provide life saving sanitation where access to water is limited. The virus provides a critical juncture. A time for critical thinking, analysis, and re-envisioning the global systems that have been in place. While we must do everything we can to flatten the curve, the Mercy World can join in the global response with our own unique gifts and voice as we advocate for those living on the margins and do all we can to make hope and justice a reality.



#### Footnotes Pages 5 & 6:

[1]"Housing, the front line defence against the COVID-19 outbreak,' says UN expert." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 18, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25727&LangID=E>

[2] Ibid

[3] Babic, Mary. "COVID-19: We Need Strong Social Protections for Families on the Edge." OXFAM: The Politics of Poverty. 19, March 2020. <https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2020/03/covid-19-we-need-strong-social-protections-for-families-on-the-edge/>

[4]"Housing, the front line defence against the COVID-19 outbreak,' says UN expert." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 18, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25727&LangID=E>

[5] Ibid

[6]"COVID-19 will not be stopped without providing safe water to people living in vulnerability – UN experts." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 23, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25738&LangID=E>

[7] Ibid

[8] Sullivan rsm, Mary. "Original Rule," Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy. University of Notre Dame Press. August 15, 1995. p. 297



# REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY AMY THOMAS



In these very uncertain times, one thing is certain- The Mercy community is flexible and finding ways to stay in communication during this time of social distancing.

About a month ago, Mercy Fellows from around the globe agreed that things really looked “Alright” and that it would be safe to meet in New York to discuss leadership strategies, as well as focus on social justice concerns that are related to our individual projects. I am so thankful that we arrived and were able to connect, especially as we are now spending so much time apart from so many loved ones.

Obviously, with many things closed in New York, this became a great lesson in flexibility. It was also a great reminder that this visit to New York wasn’t just about seeing sights, it was about reconnecting with our global Mercy community. My spirit is thankful for the team that brought us together to reconnect after so many months apart. While our 10 day journey was condensed into about 2 days, and we will be doing more online learning formats in the coming months, those 2 days were full of laughter, tears, elbow bumps, and enlightenment.

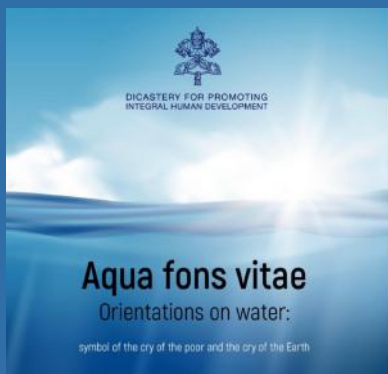
The truth is, our connection as a group is almost like a “Sisterhood”. The connections we formed in Cambodia keep getting stronger with each webinar we join, and each email we share. While we are now back in our respective towns, adjusting to life while social distancing, and finding more time to meet online in the coming months. I’m so appreciative of everyone's flexibility- getting up at 7am in Papua New Guinea for a Zoom meeting, or at 10pm in Ireland. While we live in different time zones, we have drawn closer to each other during this unique time in our world's history.

And that is the lesson I am taking with me, as I have now learned I will be working from home for “at least” the next two months- possibly even more. While we obviously know to keep our social distancing (This will be the word of the year, I guarantee it), it does not have to negatively affect our connections. If anything, I’m talking to these women more now than I did in previous months! And I’m hopeful that as months continue, and our world settles into a “New Normal” that what we have learned from this time will carry with us into our physical connections with people. We will communicate more effectively, give the best hugs, and truly be able to share with others how much we love and appreciate their place in our lives.

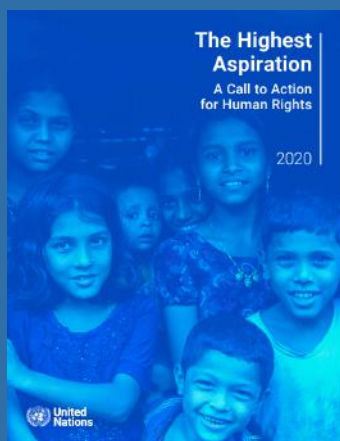


# “USEFUL RESOURCES

‘Aqua fons vitae. Orientations on Water, symbol of the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth’



The Highest Aspiration: A Call To Action for Human Rights



Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19



## UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 4 April - International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action
- 6 April - International Day of Sport for Development and Peace
- 7 April - World Health Day
- 21 April- World Creativity and Innovation Day
- 22 April - International Mother Earth Day
- 24 April - International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace
- 28 April - World Day for Safety and Health at Work
- 2 May - World Tuna Day
- 3 May - World Press Freedom Day
- 9 May (second Saturday of May) World Migratory Bird Day [UNEP]

**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](http://www.mercyworld.org)**

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