

Facilitators Guide- Mercy and the Degradation of Earth

Guiding Group

The role of the Facilitator will necessarily include organising the group's access at the session to the resources on screen or in print.

A suggested structure for each Session is:

1. Preparation of the Focus Space
2. Prayer
3. Introduction
4. Content Explored
5. Reflection and Discussion
6. Closing

As this is the second theme of the second Segment, most groups will have already met for one or more sessions and so will be familiar with the process and [the microsite](#).

Whichever presentation you, the Facilitator, or group first choose to engage with, commence your work with the theme using the Introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm. This reviews last month's theme 'Faith Traditions and Mercy', highlights the events around us: the Synod on the Amazon, Earth Day and Laudato Si' Week —for which you will find resources on our website and in the Good Reading guide —and speaks to the Pandemic before addressing this month's theme 'Mercy and the Degradation of Earth'. The relationship between our global process and the Pandemic is also addressed by Sr. Elizabeth in the already published document 'Mercy Global Presence: Gift in This Troubling Time of COVID-19'. That document can be [read/downloaded here](#) in both English and Spanish.

In her introduction to this month's theme Sr. Elizabeth asks 'To What is Mercy Calling Us?' Her question is in three parts:

'When do we answer Mercy's call?'

'How do we answer Mercy's call?'

'What do we answer in Response to Mercy's call?'

This set of questions, designed for use with the Introduction, could well be used as review questions at the end of the thematic exploration.

A number of the presenters make reference to or quote from *Laudato Si'*. *Laudato Si'* was released at the time of the [Mercy International Reflection Process](#) (MIRP), precursor of this process, and was a principal text for it. At that time we gathered Readers Guides, Videos,

Recordings, Commentaries and Articles on *Laudato Si'*. These resources can be accessed in our library [here](#). One of the outcomes of MIRP was the focus on two often intersecting themes: (i) displacement of persons and degradation of Earth. Examples of how Mercy has addressed these themes since can be found [here](#).

In addition, if you have not already engaged with the theme 'Earth and Integral Ecology' from Segment One, you might like to explore those presentations or the resources in that theme's Good Reading.

We are fortunate to have an additional contributor this month, Jenni Grove. Jenni, like Mary Bilderback rsm, is a biologist. Sr. Mary's presentation is an illustrated lyrical essay while Dr. Jenny's is a PowerPoint.

Once again we offer three of many possible approaches to using resources from the theme Mercy and the Degradation of Earth implementing the suggested structure (nos. 1-6). The approach used will depend on the needs, interests, abilities and situations of the group members. At this present time groups that are able to meet are using video conferencing. Our suggested approaches take account of this and of face-to-face-meetings becoming possible again in the future.

Facilitators may, of course, use their own approach with the resources, or choose elements from these three suggested approaches to create a different approach. At the conclusion of the Session the Facilitator or another group member is encouraged to send on 'what is too good for the group to keep to themselves' to mgpfeedback@mercyinternational.ie

Example One: Introduction:

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. When face-to-face-meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to show (on a blank wall or screen) the Reflective Prayer video to introduce this month's theme, and the introductory PowerPoint. Each participant could also be provided with a copy of the PowerPoint script.

If the group is meeting face to face, or it is possible to display it on screen, prepare a focus space with words, symbols, images and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Mercy and the Degradation of Earth'. Alternatively, members of the group could be invited to have with them in view on screen, a word, symbol, image or artefact that evokes this theme.

The PowerPoint format enables the Facilitator to easily progress or to stop at a particular point in the presentation. If using Zoom, the PowerPoint can be displayed by the Facilitator sharing her/his screen. If meeting by teleconference, it could be simplest for members of the group to view the PowerPoint individually beforehand if they have access to do so and to have a copy of the script with them for the meeting.

Share the 'Glimmers from Last Month's Reflection' to remind participants of what has gone before, and/or to introduce participants who may be commencing with this theme. Participants may be invited to share their highlight or new learning from last month's theme.

The 'Important Events Surrounding This Month's Reflection is another opportunity for brief personal sharing around the Synod of the Amazon, Earth Day and the forthcoming (at the time of writing) Laudato Si' Week.

'This COVID-19 Pandemic Time' is a reminder of the markers of this time, summarised as: *'social distancing, closed schools, businesses and borders; overcrowded hospitals, highly vulnerable long-term care facilities, ethical dilemmas about who is tested and who is treated, threatened livelihoods of millions and stalled economic activity'*. Invite participants to share one word or phrase that captures for them their experience and/or their concerns. Recall the article 'Mercy Global Presence: Gift in This Troubling Time of COVID-19' and encourage participants to read it if they have not already done so.

'Degradation of Earth – Three Layered Emergency'. Ask the participants if they had considered there to be three layers? Invite participants to share from their awareness or experience of (i) global climate change, (ii) approaching tipping points, (ii) biodiversity loss and habitat destruction.

'Degradation of Earth- To What is Mercy Calling us?' Three key questions are raised and responded to in this section of the presentation. The first reminds us that we are called to respond 'in two distinct but connected times'; the second alerts us to two possible responses, the third suggests many ways to respond, both in the present time and after the pandemic ends. Invite reflections on each section.

'Our Response in Mercy Global Presence' invites us to 'IMAGINE! NOW REIMAGINE!'

Poet Pablo Neruda famously said, "Everything you can imagine is real". This section is an opportunity to exercise the power of imagination to create a different future – 'to find wisdom, energy, new directions, new language, courage and new hope for Earth and her health.'

Invite the members of the group to spend time visualising this different future. One method would be by first taking time to sit silently and focussing on one or both of the 'Imagine if' sentences in this passage of the article.

After an agreed time, invite sharing in two rounds;

What did you imagine?

What will you do to bring that about?

Example Two: Mercy Global Action

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) the Reflective Prayer video and Closing Prayer. She/he also arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the presentation on the 8 Works of Mercy.

If the group is meeting face to face, or it is possible to display it on screen, prepare a focus space with words, symbols, images and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Mercy and the

Degradation of Earth. If not, members of the group could be invited to have with them in view on screen, a word, symbol, image or artefact that evokes this theme, with a focus on the eight Works of Mercy.

Commence the session with a screening of the Reflective Prayer video. If using Zoom, the video can be displayed by the Facilitator sharing her/his screen.

Allow time for private reflection then invite the members of the group to share a response in pairs.

Invite feedback to the whole group of a word or phrase from the video script, from what the video evoked or from the paired discussion.

Assign the 8 works of Mercy addressed in the article among the members of the group. Depending on numbers present and time available, this could mean reading alone or in pairs about two or more of the Works for most of the session time. If using Zoom, the breakout rooms would be used for pairs to meet.

Invite feedback using questions like:

What did you learn?

What surprised you?

What action could you/ your community/ cluster/ministry... take to address this issue?

Alternatively, should the group have a regular meeting time, each person reads about her topic and then undertakes to research the suggested actions to share at the next meeting, whether online or face-to-face.

Conclude the session with the Prayer of St Francis, Sign of Peace and Closing Song from the Reflective Prayer on screen.

Example Three: Reflective Prayer

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) the Reflective Prayer video. She/he also arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the prayer text.

The Context of the Reflective Prayer and the Preparation Suggestions for this prayer have been provided by the presenter.

Prior to preparation of the focus space, the group could discuss the four aspects of the Context for the Reflective prayer: (i) sharing their personal experiences of the global pandemic, (ii) their reflections on the interconnectedness of belonging learnt in the pandemic, (iii) responses to the quotations from Romans, John, Elizabeth Johnson CSJ and Laudato Si' and (iv) the call to live the two aspects of the 8th Work of Mercy in relation to Our Common Home.

This opportunity for reflection and discussion could be personal preparation for the Reflective Prayer Service.