



MERCY INTERNATIONAL
REFLECTION PROCESS

REVIEW

Review of the Mercy International Reflection Process:

*What has been discovered?
What has been revealed?*

21 April 2017



MERCY
INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

www.mercyworld.org

21 April, 2017

Sister Berneice Loch RSM
President of MIA

Sister Denise Fox RSM
Chair of MIA Board



Dear Berneice and Denise,

Accompanying this letter is the Report on the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) undertaken by MIA during 2016. The impetus for this process came from Pope Francis through his proclamation of a Year of Mercy and his promulgation of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. You, Berneice, as President of MIA and Sr. Patricia McDermott, the Chair of the MIA Board at the time, invited all Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy to participate in the process that began on 8 December, 2015, and concluded 12 December, 2016.

The process was overseen by a Guiding Team of three and ten Institute/Congregation Coordinators (see page 1 for names and photographs). This group met in Dublin, 28 September to 1 October, 2016, to develop their facility with the process and ways to implement it. On their return to their congregations or institutes, Coordinators engaged a large number of facilitators who led over 265 groups across the Mercy world. Ongoing oversight of the process was facilitated by regular teleconferences of the Guiding Team and Coordinators, and resources to accompany the process were provided through *MercyNews* and on the Mercyworld.org website.

To draw the process to a close and to prepare the Report that accompanies this letter, the Guiding Team and Coordinators together with Sister Elizabeth Davis, the members' representative for the process, and Sister Mary Reynolds, the Board's representative, met again at Mercy International Centre, Dublin, from 27-31 March, 2017. The Report which accompanies this letter gives insight into the new visions and commitments to action under two key themes that emerged from MIRP: (i) displacement of persons, and (ii) degradation of Earth. Some of these address local contexts and others invite international engagement. These appear under "What has been discovered".

A new wisdom is emerging among us from the process and the group's reflection on participants' experience of the process. Named as Mercy Global Presence, this wisdom calls for a vision for Mercy into the future which opens new possibilities beyond MIRP for MIA and for our congregations and institutes. This is discussed in the Report under "What has been revealed".

The accompanying report, therefore, weaves together these two thematics: what has been discovered and what has been revealed. Coordinators from each congregation or institute will be in touch with their respective leaders in the coming weeks, and they will be able to discuss the report more fully.

On behalf of the Guiding Team and Coordinators, I offer you for your consideration the accompanying report: ***Review of the Mercy International Reflection Process: "What has been discovered? What has been revealed?"*** A review of the four-stage process used for MIRP will be undertaken in the coming weeks, and a brief report on this will be forwarded to you in early June.

In conclusion, each of us, Coordinators and Guiding Team, thank you very sincerely for the privilege of guiding the MIRP process to this point.

Sincerely,

Elaine

Elaine Wainwright RSM
[for Guiding Team and Coordinators]

MIRP Review Participants



Back Row. L-R: Anne Walsh (*Guiding Team, International Communications Director*), Sandra Lupi ^{RSM} (*Coordinator, Brisbane Congregation*), Mary Reynolds ^{RSM} (*Executive Director MIA*), Elizabeth Davis ^{RSM} (*Congregation Leader Newfoundland & MIRP Member Liaison*), Teresa Anderson ^{RSM} (*Co-coordinator, Aotearoa New Zealand*), Elaine Wainwright ^{RSM} (*Guiding Team, International Director*), Sheila Curran (*Coordinator, The Congregation*), Patricia McMahon (*Coordinator, Great Britain Union*), Adele Howard ^{RSM} (*Coordinator, ISMAPNG*), Natalie Murphy ^{RSM} (*Co-coordinator, Aotearoa New Zealand*)

Front Row. L-R: Elizabeth Marrie ^{RSM} (*Coordinator, Newfoundland*), Marianne Comfort (*Coordinator, Americas*), Valda Dickinson ^{RSM} (*Coordinator, Parramatta & North Sydney Congregations*), Josephine Davies ^{RSM} (*Coordinator, Great Britain Institute*), Helen Diviney ^{RSM} (*Guiding Team, International Coordinator*)

Absent: Carmela Cabactulan ^{rsm} (*Coordinator, Philippines*), Kathleen Rushton ^{rsm} (*Process & Content Coordinator, Aotearoa New Zealand*)

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To what is 'Mercy International Reflection Process' calling Sisters of Mercy?

In March 2017, the Guiding Team for the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) and the congregational and institute coordinators met in a contemplative space in Dublin to reflect on the findings of the Reflection Process which had unfolded throughout 2016.

Hundreds of groups and almost five thousand Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy had participated in the Reflection Process. Two hundred sixty-five groups had formally reported to the Guiding Team. Out of the sacred listening and contemplative dialogue in which the groups engaged came a number of critical issues which can be gathered into two, often intersecting, theme areas: (i) displacement of persons, and (ii) degradation of Earth.

What has been discovered (see page 6) – participants in the groups identified the critical issues, reflected on them in the broader societal contexts and engaged with a range of traditions. They then articulated new visions which were emerging for them and identified a broad spectrum of actions at local, regional, national and/or global levels linked with either displacement of persons or degradation of Earth. Threaded throughout the visions and the actions were references to the need for a new theology, new images of God, a new language and new conversations. The reflective review of the reports from the 265 groups showed common critical issues, visions, themes, and urgent calls for action across the globe.

What has been revealed (see page 15) – as the Guiding Team and Coordinators reflected on the coming together of the experiences of all their groups, there emerged a new vision for **Mercy Global Presence**. This vision had come through listening attentively to the voices from the grassroots, the voices of so many of the Sisters, the Associates, and partners and colleagues in Mercy. **Mercy Global Presence** will be an organic entity linking congregations/institutes, individual Sisters of Mercy and Associates, partners in Mercy, and Mercy International Association in creative and energizing ways.

Shaping Mercy Global Presence – the engagement of many will be needed to create this new organic entity. In this final report, invitations encouraging accountability for shaping the vision are presented to all MIRP participants, all Sisters of Mercy, Associates and partners in Mercy; leadership teams of provinces, congregations and institutes; and Mercy International Association. To maintain the momentum begun by the Reflection Process, in 2017 the dates of April 22 and 23 (*Mercy to Earth*), mid-May (meeting of MIA Members and Board), June 16 (second anniversary of *Laudato Si'*), and September 24 (Mercy Day) will be pivotal moments for global communication and reflection.

Now is the time to take the next steps on this mercy-filled, joy-filled journey in Mercy. The Mercy world has heard anew with great urgency “the cry of Earth and cry of the Poor.” It must and will respond. **Mercy Global Presence** will be a countercultural sign in a world in which globalization has made more extreme the displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth. In a world of displacement, **Mercy Global Presence** will champion inclusion. In a world of degradation of Earth, **Mercy Global Presence** will realize its oneness in the sacred communion of all creation. In this broken world, **Mercy Global Presence** will dare Mercy in a new way.

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ON TWO KEY THEMES: (I)
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AND (II) DEGRADATION OF
EARTH.**

Introduction

A global impetus (a seismic shift in the understanding of the cosmos) affirmed by ecclesial imperatives (the Year of Mercy and *Laudato Si'*) gave rise to an invitation from Mercy International Association to Sisters of Mercy, partners in mercy and many others to become engaged in the Mercy International Reflection Process. The invitation was a call “to enter into the grace and challenge of contemplative space and to join in this Reflection Process to discern globally a shared response to the cry of the Earth, thus flaming the fire of Mercy in us and in our Universe.” The invitation was given by the Chair of the Mercy International Association Board (MIA) and the President of the MIA Members. The Reflection Process was carried out from 08 December 2015 to 12 December 2016.

The process (shown in the diagram below) engaged participants in four movements which are cyclical: beginning with experience; analyzing that experience in a broader context; engaging the wisdom traditions in light of the analysis; and concluding with an articulation of a vision that finds expression in new actions to bring about change. The engagement of participants in this process drew them into a way of reflecting religiously or theologically resulting in the beginning of an articulation of a new vision and praxis for the global Mercy community – an active *Mercy Global Presence*.

From this endeavor has emerged an appreciation of the process as a tool for transformation spiritually, theologically and ethically as the world experiences new challenges rising up from the theme of the process, “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor.” Thus, the Mercy International Reflection Process has made and will continue to make a significant contribution to church and society as had been the hope when the process began.



Gathering the findings

In March 2017, the Guiding Team for the Reflection Process, the congregational and institute Coordinators, the liaison person between the MIA Members and the Guiding Team, and the Director of MIA met at Baggot Street in Dublin in a contemplative space to reflect on the reports and findings of the Reflection Process.

As they gathered to share their findings from the year-long Reflection Process, the participants were conscious of the contextual realities of the time and place within which their groups were rooted and out of which any global sense of action must flow. Each congregation/institute, with its own flaws and frailty and faithfulness, lives within a reality not of its choosing. All have experienced decreasing numbers and increasing age. Yet several statistics show a more positive direction: the almost 500,000 partners who share this Mercy journey with the Sisters, the almost 250,000 visitors to the Mercyworld website annually who share the Mercy journey online, and the many thousands of readers of the weekly *Mercy eNews*.

Each country also has its own realities, some time-limited, some over time. Even in the days during which the group gathered in Dublin, there were news reports of the cyclone in Queensland, the devastating floods and landslides in Peru, the first defined steps in implementation of Brexit in England, the signing of anti-climate change policies by President Donald Trump in the USA, and the renewal of attention to the institutional abuses in Ireland.

In her welcome to the participants as they came into this global experience bringing the richness of their own contexts of place and time, Mary Reynolds RSM, MIA Director, posed two questions, “What has been discovered? What has been revealed?” She challenged the group with words from “Postscript” by the Irish poet, Seamus Heaney:

*Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.*

Hearts were caught off guard and blown open all along in the process since the emergence of the first imaginings of what the Mercy International Reflection Process would become. It was true for the original concept, for the production of resources such as VOICES (www.mirpvoices.org) instead of the proposed international meeting or the three proposed regional meetings, for the expectations of how the small groups would develop, and for the enthusiasm and expectation with which the Reflection Process had been received.

It should not have been a surprise that, once again in these last moments of the Process, hearts were caught off guard and blown open. The signs were there in the first two days. At the opening ritual, the symbol of the butterfly carved on the candle called those present into transformation from what has been to what will be—the participants knew that they had to hold themselves in the messiness and uncertainty of the cocoon. At Morning Prayer, Job 12:7-9 startled the participants by reminding them to “Ask the beasts, the birds, the plants and the fish”; they would tell them that “the hand of our God has done this.”

Listening to the voices: what has been discovered?

Hundreds of groups connected with the 12 congregations/institutes participated in the Reflection Process, following the four stages in varying ways over the course of 2016. Of these groups, 265 sent formal reports to the Guiding Team. Among the approximately five thousand participants were Sisters of Mercy, Associates, partners in Mercy, school children, older adults, people from various Christian denominations and other faith traditions, and people without any religious tradition. Accompanying the groups were many other persons and groups who did not make formal reports but significantly influenced the process by their prayerful support and attention to each Stage of the process. Additional groups were engaged in the process through alignment with other processes unfolding within their congregations or institutes, e.g., Chapter preparations, justice forums. *Mercy eNews* enabled participants to see the progress of all the other groups through 2016.

Out of the sacred listening and contemplative dialogue in which the groups engaged came a focus on two key themes: (i) displacement of persons, and (ii) degradation of Earth. In most instances, the two themes were intersecting with a focus on one leading to implications for the other. The chart below gives an indication of the distribution of the two themes and sub-themes across the various congregations/institutes.

ISSUE	Combined Groups	ISMAPNG	AUS NS	AUS PAR	AUS BRIS	SMA USA	CONG IRE	NWAA NZ	RSM NL	RSM PHI	UK Un	UK Inst
DISPLACED PERSONS	113											
Refugees/ Asylum Seekers	42	23		5		2	6	3	2			1
Homelessness	37	7	2	4	1	2	12	5	4			
Dementia	4										4	
Poverty	20	2		4	1	3	3	2	5			
Human Trafficking	6	3		1		1						1
Violence/ Domestic Violence	4	1		1		1		1				
DEGRADATION OF EARTH	152											
Environmental Devastation	25	3		5	4		6	6				1
Water	52	27		6		11	5	2	5		1	1
Sustainable Living	46	12	1		2	5	11	6	3			
Fracking	6	4			1	1						
Garbage/ Pollution	23	10	1	1		1		5	2	1	2	
TOTAL GROUPS	265	92	4	27	9	27	43	30	21	1	7	4

Statements of Vision

These groups identified their critical issues (Stage 1), reflected on them in the broader societal contexts (Stage 2) and engaged with the wisdom of the traditions – scriptural, theological, spiritual, ecclesial, and Mercy – in Stage 3. At the end of Stage 3, participants in the 265 groups articulated the new visions which were emerging for them. Among these statements of vision were the following:

Calls to Transformation

- ✓ Live out of deep interconnection and relationship with the natural world and each other.
- ✓ Be a community which feels the pain of Earth and the cry of the Poor with a new ecological consciousness reflected in attitudes, habits, structures and actions.
- ✓ Let God embrace us in our humanness (with its uniqueness and our diversity) in order to move us to greater compassion for and solidarity with all creation in our daily life.
- ✓ We are aware of the oneness of all God's creation – the many things that emphasise the myriad expressions of the interrelatedness and interdependence of all of God's creation – knowing that we have a responsibility to maintain the inherent sustainability of God's creation.
- ✓ We choose to live with respect for creation, especially by our own acts of simplifying our use of material things, which contributes to the important and noble work of respecting and saving our “common home.”
- ✓ Our “common good” is based on the realization of our on-going creation and indwelling of the presence of God, in the communion of Saints and beyond – the fundamental unity of all being – love, the web of life.
- ✓ Like the Woman at the Well, we are called to listen deeply, dialogue and be transformed, and become messengers of hope.
- ✓ Hope is something we have to create; we need to seek, to share, and be in solidarity with other hope seekers.

Cry of the Poor

- ✓ Envision cities and towns where homelessness is prevented, treated and resolved for all; safe, affordable housing is basic in giving people dignity, hope and a sense of belonging.
- ✓ Respond to displacement by telling, re-telling and listening to stories of displacement, thus providing sources of hope, wisdom and energy for continued conversion and response in action.
- ✓ Continue to grow in the awareness of the challenge of living mercy today as expressed through contemporary needs, especially by supporting those who suffer from dementia.
- ✓ We are being called to collective action in changing the narrative within public discourse with regard to “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor.”
- ✓ Co-responsibility is key for the success of the community in protecting the common good.
- ✓ With regard to displaced persons, we need an open heart, an open mind and an open home.
- ✓ Our vision is to create a just society which calls for the elimination of child poverty for indigenous children.

Stage 4 of the Reflection Process invited participants to imagine and commit to new action to bring about change. Such action could be at the local, regional, national and/or global levels. The groups identified a broad spectrum of such actions which were linked with either displacement of persons or degradation of Earth.

Action to Address Displacement of Persons

Actions in response to “the cry of the Poor” and the displacement of persons were named and in some instances actually implemented. The following list gives a sense of some of these named actions:

Advocacy in General

- ✓ Strengthen the advocacy arm of ISMAPNG to enable the Institute to have a public voice
- ✓ Be more conscious of being inclusive and relational
- ✓ Continue to support *Citizens UK* (an NGO which organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good, the home of community organising in the UK, with diverse civil society alliances)
- ✓ Hold Governments to account by letter writing related to existing policies which are not followed and the need to create better policies related to matters such as treatment of refugees and climate change
- ✓ Work with the *Vita* project in Africa (an organization whose values revolve around inclusion, enablement, sustainability and accountability which is imbedded into every aspect of the work; the ethos is to enable people to manage their own development, while supporting them in achieving sustainable livelihoods)
- ✓ Attend to our inner dimensions such as vulnerability, impact of letting go, uncertainty, living with difference in order to reduce their control over our behaviour.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- ✓ Mobilize our power internationally through MIA with respect to refugees and efforts against human trafficking
- ✓ Lobby politicians and the United Nations to give serious attention to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide
- ✓ Work with Jesuit Refugee Service about ways to welcome refugees to the local area
- ✓ Assist an existing project, *Oldham Unity*, to provide food, clothing, legal services and medical help for destitute asylum seekers
- ✓ Encourage MIA to continue to lobby the United Nations to keep in the forefront extravagant injustices towards asylum seekers
- ✓ Work with *Doras Luimní* (an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation working to support and promote the rights of all migrants living in Limerick and the wider Mid-West region with a goal of changing the lives of migrants, changing legislation and changing society)
- ✓ Work to better understand how direct provision (a system of dealing with asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland) works and engage in lobbying for transformation of that system
- ✓ Be more mindful of our interaction with people from other countries living among us with a conscious effort to be inclusive
- ✓ Lobby government for a more compassionate response to refugees and asylum seekers in offshore detention centres
- ✓ Host a potluck at a local parish to celebrate the diversity of cultures in our area
- ✓ Learn more about racism in our area
- ✓ Encourage the Institute (ISMAPNG) to commission a professionally produced video entitled “Extravagant Justice,” highlighting what can be done to eliminate extravagant injustice

- ✓ Speak with asylum seekers and refugees in order to become more aware of their reasons for coming to our country and the challenges which they face
- ✓ Attend a forum/Q&A style discussion during refugee week for staff, students and families using the documentary, *Chasing Asylum*
- ✓ School staff members visit and support the women and children who are living in the local refugee shelters through conversation and friendship
- ✓ Be advocates for the asylum seekers where possible, especially those being trafficked or suffering from domestic violence.

Poverty and Homelessness

- ✓ Raise consciousness about slum landlords by contacting City Hall and those responsible for inspections
- ✓ Set up a loan scheme to give start-up money to apply for rented housing
- ✓ Endeavour to conscientize family members, friends and work colleagues about the plight of homeless people with suggested ways of responding
- ✓ Support *Focus Ireland* (Ireland's leading not for profit working to prevent people becoming, remaining or returning to homelessness)
- ✓ Endeavour to increase understanding between indigenous children and western children in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia
- ✓ Advocate for low paid workers to be paid a just wage by supporting the Living Wage Movement and promoting the benefits to employers of paying a fair and just wage
- ✓ Provide a house for homeless women in Auckland
- ✓ Become a volunteer in *Heart of the Hills* (an internet and Facebook forum promoting activities which support vulnerable families and youth)
- ✓ Support the work of the local St. Vincent de Paul Society
- ✓ Join fundraising efforts to assist *The Gathering Place* (a centre supporting homeless persons and persons in very poor home situations)
- ✓ Work to assist girls in developing countries with their ability to attend school, e.g., *Days for Girls* (an organization committed to supporting the inherent worth and dignity of girls by providing sustainable feminine hygiene solutions and health education).

Human Trafficking

- ✓ Raise money for *Women@theWell* (a women-only drop-in centre in Kings Cross, London, dedicated to supporting women whose lives are affected by or at risk of being affected by prostitution)
- ✓ Provide information kits to give more information on human trafficking (already completed)
- ✓ Raise awareness within the parish about human trafficking through speakers at Sunday Mass, distribution of brochures from ACRATH (an organization committed to working together towards the elimination of human trafficking in Australia, the Asia Pacific region, and globally) and group reflection on "Changing the Conversation about Asylum Seekers and Refugees"
- ✓ Support MIA's initiatives against human trafficking

Persons with Dementia

- ✓ Continue to research all aspects of dementia care, remembering that the person is more than dementia
- ✓ Continue to fund organizations already providing support for those living with dementia and their carers
- ✓ Be present, physically and emotionally, to distressed older persons who have to move to a new place because their care home is closing.

Action to Address Degradation of Earth

Often linked with the response to “the cry of the Poor” were actions responding to “the cry of Earth” and the degradation of the environment. Among the actions identified at the local, regional, national and/or global levels were the following:

Calls to Transformation

- ✓ Examine our complicity in consumerism through continuing reflection and a mantra “may I live gratefully and simply today”
- ✓ Develop policies and strategies which facilitate public action, e.g., refugees, climate change, sustainable living
- ✓ Enable awareness/connection/participation with Earth and each other by acting out of the eighth spiritual and corporal work of Mercy, show mercy to our common home
- ✓ Connect with other groups around sustainable living (e.g., local government organisations, similar groups locally and globally)
- ✓ Encourage ethical investments linked with impacts of climate change
- ✓ Conduct an environmental impact study and make changes as needed
- ✓ Keep ourselves informed and support groups such as *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* and *Friends of the Earth*
- ✓ Engage parishes by supporting the local Eco Congregation Committee in our parish, celebrating creation and care for creation in our parish liturgies, and using topics relating to the care for our environment in Lenten Groups, Social Justice Sundays and homilies
- ✓ Add Pope Francis’ two new corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy (care for our common home and grateful contemplation of Earth) into the school’s mission statement
- ✓ Network with groups addressing climate change e.g., *1 Million Women and 10,000 Teens* (an organization building a movement of inspirational women and girls acting on climate change through the way they live).

Water

- ✓ Encourage and promote individual and communal water use and conservation
- ✓ Local area awareness raising and education, e.g., use of bottled water, flooding, irrigation practices
- ✓ Education around pollution of water and use of cleaning products
- ✓ Through MIA, develop a unified voice around the protection of waterways
- ✓ Through MIA, develop educational and learning situations around use of water and effects of pollution especially relating to marine life
- ✓ Protest a water bottling plant that would prioritize a corporation's needs over the needs of local community
- ✓ Offer a daylong retreat on water to enable a larger group of people to analyze, reflect on and commit to action on this precious resource
- ✓ Work with the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu to accompany them as they face the prospect of environmental damage from rising seas and the possibility of being environmental refugees.

Mining

- ✓ Attend protests and court appearances of residents from the Hunter Region and Liverpool Plains in Australia whose lands are being devastated by coal-seam gas mining
- ✓ Keep alive awareness of the devastating implications of fracking by reading and being alert to media reports.

Pollution

- ✓ Meet with authorities, community leaders, institutions and groups interested in climate change, ensuring that the negative effects of improper disposal of garbage on climate change are understood
- ✓ Avoid being a throw-away society by devising strategies for recycling, reducing water/electricity consumption and prevention of pollution.



Appeal for New Understandings and New Language

Threaded throughout the visions and the actions were references to the need for a new theology, new images of God, a new language and new conversations. Among such references are the following:

New Language

- ✓ Write Beatitudes for today (see attached)
- ✓ Prepare the Stations of the Cross using the story and experience of a girl who was trafficked
- ✓ Write our own laments about the displacement of persons for use in prayer and in liturgy in the style of biblical psalms
- ✓ Arising out of the MIRP experience, encourage MIA theologians to articulate the spirituality of Mercy in a new age
- ✓ Continue to read and think about creation theology despite the differences in understanding among us
- ✓ We will hold a Holy Hour and Exposition each Wednesday evening for 'immediate' world attention – wars, catastrophe/devastation/refugees/hunger, floods, etc.
- ✓ We use a creation-centred Ritual for Evening Prayer, e. g., Máire Naughton's *Evening Prayer for 1st September*.

New Understandings

- ✓ Ask myself daily, "When/how have I opened my eyes and ears and heart in Mercy today?"
- ✓ Dialogue with Celtic, Indigenous and Indigenous Australian understandings and practices in relationship to Earth, self and the other
- ✓ Live in the present moment/be present to the presence of the other
- ✓ Ask the question "How will this choice/decision that I/we are about to make effect the earth community of life?"
- ✓ We will take the time to speak with people we see on the streets who are homeless. In doing this we will be working to get beyond our fears, our judgemental attitudes and our assumptions so we can meet the person who is there
- ✓ Through the course of the process we underwent a change of attitude to homeless people. One of the most transformative moments for us was hearing that the greatest pain of homeless people is being treated as faceless, unseen, disregarded and ignored as not being seen as human beings
- ✓ We show our respect for human life by listening to each other, valuing each other's contributions, helping each other where we can
- ✓ Read *Walking Gently on Earth* (a book produced by the Sisters of Mercy of the Western Province in Ireland which tells of the Sisters' efforts and commitment to live more sustainably so as to protect "our common home")
- ✓ Familiarize ourselves with our congregational *Policy for Ecological Responsibility* (Ireland) and implement whatever we can in our particular contexts – an excellent guideline for our journey onwards
- ✓ Involve people outside the Cluster (Ireland) in a similar awareness raising experience by forming a new group that would be wider than Mercy.

Forwarding the Actions

Each Coordinator is committed to bringing the reports from the groups connected with her congregation or institute to her leadership team(s), highlighting especially the statements of vision and the recommended actions. All the reports are available to the Coordinators, and some Coordinators may choose to make their leadership teams aware of specific actions recommended by groups other than their own.

While most actions identified were local and/or personal, a number by their very nature have global implications, e.g., displaced peoples (homelessness, refugees or those forced to migrate because of earthquakes, work and economics) or ecological devastation (e.g., water, litter, plastics, ecological debt, sustainability). Indeed through the Mercy International Reflection Process, there has emerged a growing concern for the other than human on our planet.

In addition to those recommended actions which, by their nature, have global implications, actions were identified with particular reference to Mercy International Association (MIA). Among such actions which are directed to MIA are the following:

- ✓ Put our MIRP Group Collective Action Report (ISMAPNG) on *Mercy eNews* to raise awareness of our opposition to the two current Nuclear Waste Dump Proposals, of medium and high level nuclear waste from other parts of the world, in South Australia, and to connect with other Mercy Groups with similar concerns throughout the Mercy World
- ✓ Mobilize our power internationally through MIA with respect to refugee/human trafficking, include some of the actions in this area emerging from the Australian MIRP Response in the *Mercy eNews*, and encourage and sustain international connections into the future
- ✓ Consider a collective action for change, namely, to lobby politicians and the United Nations to give serious attention to and to keep up front the current extravagant injustices towards the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, worldwide
- ✓ Exercise leadership by enabling its Mercy network to work towards positive change in the interconnected areas of displacement of peoples and the degradation of Earth, which is 'our common home'
- ✓ Initiate a communications conduit to coordinate and amplify its advocacy for and its action response to the critical, interconnected concerns of displacement and degradation of the earth, with their global implications; that is, to set up ways that can leverage our 'world-wide reach' through local communities, so unifying our voice and mobilising our energies to practise the works of mercy most effectively
- ✓ Address the issue of homelessness throughout the Mercy World
- ✓ Place a particular emphasis on highlighting the plight of people who are homeless, migrant or without a country and join with other organisations in advocating for these people
- ✓ Articulate, through the Mercy theologians involved in the Reflection Process, something about the spirituality of Mercy in a new age arising out of the MIRP experience
- ✓ Promote the Appreciative Inquiry Process in other Congregations and Institutes of Mercy
- ✓ Ensure that 'Justice Issues' take on the Appreciative Inquiry approach and focus on the wider sense of Earth justice/inner work and human justice
- ✓ Support the Mercy International Voices (Mercy Efforts to Counter Child Prostitution and Trafficking in the Hospitality Sector) with respect to the issues of refugees/human trafficking by giving moral support to the Sisters working for this group in the hotel Industry and by sharing relevant information or resources

- ✓ Share information among the groups in the Reflection Process about what has happened with respect to garbage
- ✓ Encourage ethical investments from a pro-climate stance
- ✓ Create a worldwide, well-designed and researched campaign through media sources and social media to educate co-workers, associates and students as well as those who work in Mercy ministries on the issue of the degradation of water and how each person impacts that as well as the issue of the use and storage of water
- ✓ Take a creative leap to implement an MIA initiative to save the oceans from developing Dead Zones (low-oxygen areas in the world's oceans and large lakes, caused by excessive nutrient pollution from human activities coupled with other factors that deplete the oxygen required to support most marine life in bottom and near-bottom water)
- ✓ Create a vision statement containing the intentions of Mercy World Organizations to develop the theme of “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor” around the issues of sustainable water uses and other resources
- ✓ Help connect Mercy Sisters/Associates who are living and working in countries/areas where water degradation is acute, including offering practical support through monetary help and/or social activism, raising awareness through Mercy Communication channels.

Many concluded that this is the start of a process with conversations which will continue and evolve. There were pleas to garner and share the learnings from the Reflection Process, to co-ordinate (cross-fertilise globally) and to continue the work in progress. There were strong commitments to engagement in the global response that will emerge as the Guiding Team and Coordinators reflect on the sum of the reports and recommendations. Mercy International Association is expected to make a difference in the world by harnessing the energy that was created world-wide.

The Guiding Team and Coordinators also agreed that it would be important to reflect further on the actual process which was used throughout the past year, to discern learnings from using the process and to make recommendations to MIA on the possible application of these learnings to the ongoing work and processes of MIA. This reflection will happen over the next few months, and the results will be forwarded to the Board Chair and Executive Director of MIA before the end of June 2017.

From what has been discovered to what has been revealed

The reflective review of the reports from the two hundred sixty-five groups at each stage of the process showed common critical issues, common visions, common themes, and common urgent calls for action across the globe from all congregations and institutes. The energy, attention and commitment given by the participants in all the groups were tangible throughout the reports. The participants, in sharing the experience from their congregational and institute groups, conveyed the urgency of finding new ways of being Mercy on Earth and among people crying out for justice. But how could the ways in which the process was used and the creativity which emerged become sources of inspiration for new ways of being and living Mercy? How were these findings challenging all congregations and institutes and Mercy International Association to dare a new way of seeing and being Mercy? To what kind of **Mercy Global Presence** was the Reflection Process calling Sisters of Mercy? What was being revealed?

Listening to the voices: what has been revealed?

As the Guiding Team and Coordinators gathered in truly communal and global contemplation and as they reflected on the coming together of the experiences of all their groups, the facilitator asked the poignant question, “To what kind of *Mercy Global Presence* is MIRP calling Sisters of Mercy?” In response, there slowly emerged a new vision for *Mercy Global Presence*.

This vision had come through listening attentively to the voices from the grassroots, the voices of so many of the Sisters, the Associates, and the partners and colleagues in Mercy. These voices were echoing “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor” in their heightened awareness of displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth and in their heightened passion to respond locally and globally.

The actions that the groups had identified reflected a sense of being a global community which has a greater possibility of understanding the painful complexities of the displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth and has a greater capacity to respond in the forty-four countries in which they live and minister. They found the courage to act and stand in solidarity with others because they were more aware of the fragility of their own displacement and degradation, their own flaws, fragility and faithfulness. They also found the courage to act in collaboration with diverse, unexpected partners. In implicit ways in showing the intersections between the displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth, the group reports also reflected a stronger awareness of being one in the sacred communion of all creation.

In other words, the very engagement in the Mercy International Reflection Process gave glimpses of what an intentional entity, *Mercy Global Presence*, would look like. It would be an organic entity linking congregations/institutes, individual Sisters of Mercy and Associates, partners in Mercy, and Mercy International Association in creative and energizing ways. Such a *Mercy Global Presence* would be a countercultural sign in a globalized world which has made more extreme the displacement of persons and degradation of Earth. It would further the dream of the globalization of mercy and compassion.

Three symbols emerged to bring more clarity about this *Mercy Global Presence*: the holon, the butterfly and the global heartbeat. *Holon* is a word which means something that is simultaneously a whole and a part, retaining its integrity and identity at the same time as it is a part of a larger system. Each of the congregations and institutes and Mercy International Association will be an integrated part of this *Mercy Global Presence* with each holding its own identity and integrity. Such a structure will be organic not hierarchical, certainly a common characteristic of all organic entities but foreign to human organizations which are almost always hierarchical.

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THREE SYMBOLS EMERGED TO BRING MORE CLARITY ABOUT THIS *MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE*: THE HOLON, THE BUTTERFLY AND THE GLOBAL HEARTBEAT.

The *butterfly* holds two separate meanings as a way of further understanding this new *Mercy Global Presence*. The image of the caterpillar emerging from the cocoon as a glorious butterfly has been used as a symbol of change and transformation for thousands of years. How does one go about becoming a butterfly if the only experience of life has been as a caterpillar? The time in the cocoon is a time of messiness, uncertainty and ambiguity. Like the coming to be of a butterfly, the coming to be of this new entity will not be easy or comfortable or predictable. This intense, radical transformation means leaving behind the security of what has been, daring to enter a space of discomfort and chaos, and accepting the unimaginable. A second meaning of the butterfly is contained in the phrase, “the butterfly effect.” It means that small actions can often have large effects; every action counts. In his book, *Jesus Today*, Albert Nolan, op, speaks about the globalization of peace, compassion and justice “from below,” from the voices of marginalized people, from the grassroots, from the everyday actions of ordinary people.

The third image which emerged to help strengthen the sense of what *Mercy Global Presence* would be was that of a *global heart* and a *global heartbeat*. A global heart shifts the centre from me to our place to our world; it shifts the centre from the person to the planet to the cosmos. It is big enough to invite in the poor and the sick and the stranger and the naked and the imprisoned; it is big enough to include as partners the most diverse and unexpected people. A global heartbeat is that global heart holding life and energy and promise. A global heart beats with compassion for the displacement and degradation, and a global heart is moved with compassion to make a difference.

This *Mercy Global Presence* will find substance and shape through further communal and global contemplation. This will happen only with the ongoing reflective engagement of the participants in MIRP whose voices led to the shaping of this vision. These voices include those of the Sisters of Mercy who were engaged in MIRP, who held MIRP in prayerful support, who aligned MIRP with other processes, or who will become involved in future processes. They also include the voices of the leadership teams of the congregations and institutes, the Board and staff members of Mercy International Association, and many others who share the Mercy journey. This will mean opening new conversations, finding new language, searching for new expressions of spirituality, and developing new theologies and new rituals. It will also mean using the best and most creative in online communications.

The very creation of *Mercy Global Presence* will be a paradox: a global entity which is organic not hierarchical, a global entity which is rooted in local contextual realities. Once shaped, it will change each congregation and institute, and it will change Mercy International Association.

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Invitations leading to the new vision

Because the shaping of **Mercy Global Presence** will require the engagement of so many, the following invitations are extended:

To All MIRP Participants (those who were directly involved in groups, those who gave prayerful support, or those who were aligned through engagement in other related processes)

- Reflect further on their own experience, sharing with others the fruits of that rich experience.
- Maintain a link with the ongoing processes directed towards shaping **Mercy Global Presence** even if their own MIRP group is no longer meeting.

To All Sisters of Mercy, Associates and Partners in Mercy

- Learn more about the Reflection Process, first noting how it was experienced in their own places and then how it unfolded globally.
- Participate in the processes directed towards shaping **Mercy Global Presence** in whatever ways are most feasible for them.
- Hold the leadership teams of their congregations or institutes accountable for continuing processes to shape **Mercy Global Presence**.

Responsibility for the leadership of the journey towards the **Mercy Global Presence** will be held by the leadership teams of the congregations, institutes and provinces and by the Board of the Mercy International Association. To these groups, the following invitations are offered:

To Province/Congregation/Institute Leadership:

- Acknowledge the insights, new relationships, interactions, new images of God and actions that emerged from the process and communicate this good news throughout the province/congregation/institute.
- Explore, in connection with other leadership teams and MIA, the promise and possibilities of the proposed vision of **Mercy Global Presence**. Help modify and strengthen the vision.
- Provide the resources (personal and financial) needed to realize this vision.
- Prepare, with other leadership teams and MIA, the strategy to begin and sustain the journey to this **Mercy Global Presence**.
- Inform the province/congregation/institute that, through the work of the MIRP groups, a vision of **Mercy Global Presence** has emerged.
- Acknowledge the specific recommendations from the MIRP groups to the province/congregation /institute, commit to attending to them and give feedback as the recommendations are addressed.
- Invite the province/congregation/institute to continue to engage with the resources on the Mercyworld.org website, e.g., VOICES, and in *Mercy eNews*.
- Invite the province/congregation/institute to engage with the outcomes of the specific recommendations being addressed by MIA.

To *Mercy International Association*

- Acknowledge the insights, new relationships, interactions, new images of God and new actions that emerged from the Mercy International Reflection Process and communicate this good news throughout the Mercy world.
- Inform the Mercy world that, through the work of the MIRP groups, a vision of *Mercy Global Presence* has emerged.
- Develop ways of responding to the invitations to global action in response to “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor” emerging from the MIRP process. This in its turn will contribute to the emerging *Mercy Global Presence*.
- Explore, in connection with other leadership teams, the promise and possibilities of the proposed vision of *Mercy Global Presence*. Help strengthen the vision.
- Prepare, with other leadership teams, the strategy to begin and sustain the journey to this *Mercy Global Presence*.
- Develop a mechanism through the Mercyworld.org website by which people can connect throughout the Mercy world on issues in an interactive way.
- Continue to provide resources and opportunities for global engagement that help growth in understanding and the living out of a new theology.
- Make Uber teleconferencing information available to groups in order to engage in the previous two actions.
- Develop a directory on Mercyworld.org website of members of the global Mercy community (Sisters of Mercy, Associates and Partners in Mercy) who are resource persons on various topics.
- Explore ways in which some aspects of the MIRP proposals for international responses to “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor” could be incorporated into the work of Mercy Global Action internationally and at the United Nations with extended attention to issues of concern relating to refugees and to water.

As a result of this review, there is an imperative that the Mercy world continues its engagement with processes flowing from the Mercy International Reflection Process. There is an awareness also that this cannot happen without the commitment of resources, both financial and personnel.

The future beckoning

It is daunting to realize that living into such ***Mercy Global Presence*** will further change every congregation, every institute and the Mercy International Association. Two things are certain: (i) there is already movement in this direction in so many visible ways (the Mercy International Reflection Process itself being only one way), and (ii) there is the certainty of the engagement of so many in helping shape this vision (the many MIRP participants who have called Sisters of Mercy to this vision, all Sisters of Mercy, the congregational and institute leadership teams, the MIA Board and staff members).

Much more work needs to be done to set out further steps along the journey. The momentum given by MIRP must be maintained as the seed of this vision is carried to the leaders and to the MIA Board. There must be an assurance that someone or some body holds the accountability for leading the journey towards this vision with resources to support the journey. In 2017, the dates of April 22 and 23 (*Mercy to Earth*), mid-May (meeting of MIA Members and Board), June 16 (second anniversary of *Laudato Si'*) and September 24 (Mercy Day) will be touchstone moments in the next steps.

The voices of the people have been heard. These voices have caught hearts off guard and blown them open. The Mercy International Reflection Process has indeed led to the Kairos moment to which the leaders in the Mercy world had invited Sisters of Mercy and Partners in Mercy. Now is the time to take the next steps on this mercy-filled, joy-filled journey in Mercy. In a global world, there will be a ***Mercy Global Presence***. In a world of displacement, ***Mercy Global Presence*** will champion inclusion. In a world of degradation of the environment, ***Mercy Global Presence*** will realize its oneness in the sacred communion of all creation. The Mercy world has heard “the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor” in a new way. It will respond by seeing Mercy in a new way and by daring Mercy in a new way.

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Attachments

The Beatitudes as we see the world today:

1. Blessed are those who live from the depths of their being.
They will see, radiate and attract goodness and know true freedom.
2. Blessed are those who recognise that our earth is in mourning because of human abuse and destruction.
They will comfort it.
3. Blessed are those who recognise their littleness in the whole of the cosmos.
They shall share in the co-creation of an unfinished universe.
4. Blessed are those who live in right relationship with all of life.
They will bring about change in the world.
5. Blessed are the merciful.
For they shall know the heart of God.
6. Blessed are those who are so in God's love.
They shall know it is God who lives and acts in them.
7. Blessed are those who live in harmony with all earth's creatures.
They will come to experience a deep peace within themselves.
8. Blessed are those who seek justice for people who are throwaways in our society.
They will know the true worth of all of Creation.

~ Brisbane Group, Ireland



The Flaggy Shore, County Clare, Ireland

Postscript

*And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.*

~ Seamus Heaney