

Weaving a New Fabric of Mercy Through Global Contemplation and Ecological Conversion

A REPORT OF MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE PROCESS

September 2019 – June 2021

www.mercyglobalpresence.org



'Who are we if not kin?

Where is the Table where we could sit together?

See us – the different – sitting as one,

Halo-ed and held by our only common identity: 'HUMAN',

By our one shared place – this green but groaning Earth...'

Maureen Murphy rsm (GB Union), 'Who are we if not kin?',
Artistic Response: Faith Traditions and Mercy, Segment Two

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Introduction

For surely you know the plans I have for you... to give you a future with hope. Jer 29:11

Chimes ~ single gong ~ ripple of a stream ~ meadow ~ morning dew ~ earth after rain ~ shimmering blue/green/purple ~ rainbow ~ spectrum with black and brown and white ~ open arms ~ bird in flight ~ dew drop ~ covenant ~ welcome ~ joy – with these images, the participants at MIA's Wellsprings 2018 evoked the sound, sight, smell, shape and promise of Mercy Global Presence! More effectively than any words, these images reminded us as Sisters of Mercy, Associates in Mercy, and partners in Mercy that Mercy Global Presence is joy-filled, intimate, challenging, and life-giving even as we struggle to describe or even recognize it in our midst.

How could we find the words, the language, or the theology to articulate something so precious? Yet we must find new words, new language, and new theology if we are to allow this gift to emerge among us and around us in our own places, in our countries and on Earth. The **Mercy International Reflection Process** gave name to this reality which has long been coming to birth among us. During 2016, the Year of Mercy, five thousand people in forty-four countries shared life experiences, written texts, and stories of mercy in small groups and in large groups and generously shared the fruits of those conversations with each other. Mercy Global Presence emerged as an expression of a way forward in a global response to the cry of Earth and the cry of Poor, cries flowing from the degradation of Earth and the displacement of persons.

Mercy International Association developed one further way to engage the Mercy world in global contemplation, moving to shape the new words, new language, new spirituality, and new theology. Through Mercy *eNews* and the newly revised Mercyworld.org website, a sixteen-month global exploration of **Mercy Global Presence** unfolded from September 2019 to June 2021, inviting the engagement of Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy worldwide. The framework for the exploration reflected a new unfolding of the four movements in the spiral of the Mercy International Reflection Process: personal experience, social context, link with the tradition, and new vision. It was rooted in the conviction that Mercy Global Presence is alive and active in the ministries of all our Sisters and partners in Mercy, in the many connections and collaborations in which we are engaged, and in our increased awareness of the rich diversity among us. Multiple cultures and languages were threaded throughout this exploration with special emphasis on the power and promise of intercultural wisdom and energy.

Each month brought its own rhythm: an opening video setting the context and inviting engagement; reflections from theologians, artists, grassroots ministers, global thinkers, scientists, and distinct voices from the Mercy world with opportunities for reflective prayer; and an invitation to engagement in personal reflection, small group conversations, blogs or comments, and other resources on the website. Regional gatherings, designed to accommodate differing time zones, integrated a new depth of global contemplation throughout the Mercy world.

The Mercy Global Presence process was truly an experience of praxis, of reflective and reflected action emerging out of a new vision and theology for liberation and transformation. Throughout the process, the interplay of contemplation and action unfolded in new and energizing ways in this new time.

This report summarizes the foundational steps which led to the Mercy Global Presence process – the Mercy International Research Conference, the Theological Advisory Commission proposal, and the Mercy International Reflection Process. It then outlines the process which unfolded. It contains details of each of the four segments and sixteen themes. It includes reflections from the participants on their experience and learnings from their active engagement in the process. It summarizes the fruits of the six sets of regional gatherings. It also acknowledges the impact of the global pandemic on our world and, therefore, on Mercy Global Presence.

May your reading of this report be for you a catalyst in your own lived experience of mercying flowing from contemplative presence and flowing into contemplative presence. May it give you deeper insight into the beauty, the depth, the global reach, and the blessed moment in time that was Mercy International Association's Mercy Global Presence.

Foundational steps

MERCY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Burlingame, California, USA, 9th – 13th November 2007

The **Mercy International Research Conference**, organized by the Mercy International Research Commission, was held at Mercy Center, Burlingame, California, on November 9-13, 2007, with 26 invited researchers and other experts from many parts of the Mercy world, from Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the Philippines, United States of America, Newfoundland, Honduras, Jamaica, Tonga, Guyana and Kenya. Its theme was: “Fire Cast on the Earth—Kindling: Being Mercy in the Twenty-First Century.”



Back Row L-R: Veronica Lawson rsm, Teresa Lowe Ching rsm, Adele Howard rsm, Sophie McGrath rsm, Elizabeth Davis rsm, Janette Gray rsm, Sheila O'Dea rsm, Francis Añover rsm, Tui Cadogan rsm, Meta Reid rsm, Frances Repka, Ethel Bignell rsm, Margaret Farley rsm, Doris Liptak rsm, Mary Noel Menezes rsm, Mary Kay Dobrovolny rsm, Penny Roker rsm, Kathleen Murphy rsm, Mary Lyons rsm, Mary C. Sullivan rsm
Front Row L-R: Janet Ruffing rsm, Bonnie Brennan rsm, Patricia Fox rsm, Anne Hannon rsm, Ana María Pineda rsm, Doris Gottemoeller rsm, Patricia Bell rsm, Elizabeth McMillan rsm, Elizabeth Dowling rsm, Anne Itotia rsm, Senolita Vakata rsm, Elaine Wainwright rsm

The following papers were presented:

1. *How Can We Dare Wisdom and Mercy in the Mosaic of Our Realities?* (Elizabeth M. Davis rsm)
2. *Africa: Urbanisation & Proliferation of Slums* (Anne Itotia rsm)
3. *Global Human Trafficking: A Mercy Concern* (Elizabeth McMillan rsm)
4. *The History and Experience of Latinos/Hispanics in the United States* (Ana Maria Pineda rsm)
5. *Gender Development in Oceania Region* (Senolita T. Vakata rsm)
6. *Catherine McAuley in the Nineteenth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Mary C. Sullivan rsm)
7. *History of the Sisters of Mercy of Ireland in Terms of the Ministry of Spirituality* (Bonnie Brennan rsm)
8. *A U.S. Sister of Mercy Dialogues with Tradition* (Dolores Liptak rsm)
9. *Mercy Fire Kindled in Guyana – April 1894: Still Burning – 2007* (Mary Noel Menezes rsm)
10. *The Political Ministry of Women: An Australian Perspective* (Sophie McGrath rsm)
11. *Mercy Embodied/Embodied Mercy as Justice, Wisdom and Holiness* (Elaine Wainwright rsm)
12. *Enkindling Mercy in a Multicultural Context: Focus on Jamaica* (Theresa Lowe Ching rsm)
13. *Fire Cast on the Earth: Spiritual Implications for Mercy in the 21st Century* (Janet K. Ruffing rsm)
14. *Lessons from the New Ecclesial Movements* (Doris Gottemoeller rsm)
15. *Forgiveness: A Work of Mercy Newly Relevant in the Twenty-First Century* (Margaret A. Farley rsm)
16. *Women as the Image of God: Fire Cast on the Earth – Kindling* (Patricia A. Fox rsm)

The Conference followed a theological reflection cycle to explore the fundamental social and global trends that underpin and ultimately shape our efforts to be MERCY in the twenty-first century. The goal was to challenge Mercy women to engage in ongoing dialogue between the Word of God and life as we read the signs of our times with the eyes of God and with our women's hearts.

The prayer for the conference was:

God of Mercy and Justice, we ask you, through the intercession of Catherine McAuley and all our founding Mercy pioneers throughout the world, to bless with your guidance and wisdom those involved in the forthcoming Mercy International Research Conference. We pray, with confidence in your abiding call to us, that this conference will be truly fruitful for the Mercy world and beyond. Amen

Vision

A vision is the reality of the future for which we yearn. Out of the first three stages of our theological reflection process, this vision emerged:

We Sisters of Mercy in the twenty-first century are in radical communion beyond all borders. We are grounded in the compassion of God.

We are nurtured by the Gospel, and by the story of Catherine McAuley and of Mercy lived and living.

Aware of our own brokenness, we join with others in healing the wounds of Earth and Earth's peoples.

Theology

Theology emerged from the major themes that both informed and provoked our process of theological reflection. Our theologizing was multifaceted, reflecting the different contexts of Mercy.

Doing theology during the days spiraled into and out of our engagement with experiences of the contextual and historical realities we shared. These then spiraled into dialogue with the biblical, theological, spiritual, and ecclesial traditions in which we stand.

We were touched deeply by the pain of those who are impoverished, especially women and children and the Earth.

We recognized our own complicity in the brokenness and woundedness and our need for forgiveness.

We were caught up into the womb-compassion, steadfast love, faithfulness, and graciousness of God, of Jesus as embodied mercy and of the Spirit permeating all.

We were drawn into a theology of communion, of God who is communion.

We experienced in our theologizing a yearning for God to be imaged as female as well as male.

We were impassioned toward a theology of mercy that is formed and tested by justice as well as compassion.

We were challenged to break the cycles of violence in our world and in our own realities through radical forgiveness of the other.

Recognizing that what we had begun was but a single moment, we were impelled to continue to develop theologies and spiritualities of Mercy that draw on the rich resources among us as Sisters of Mercy engaged in Mercy across the globe. This will enkindle in us the fire of Mercy in response to the cries and pain of the most wounded, including Earth.

Praxis

Praxis is reflective and reflected action emerging out of a new vision and theology for liberation and transformation.

We Sisters of Mercy embrace the vision of a radical communion beyond all borders. Therefore, we will:

Develop theologies and spiritualities for Mercy that flow from ongoing storytelling in our different contexts, in dialogue with our local and global experiences and with our sacred traditions and texts.

Engage in theological reflection processes in ways that deepen and expand our theological understandings and praxis.

Reclaim the motivating force of the call of Catherine McAuley and give new expression to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Use multiple ways to share the passion and pain in the stories of Mercy so that our local experiences resonate with the global.

Deepen and expand images of God in ways that will give women the confidence to know that they have been made in the image of God.

Provide opportunities for cross-cultural, contextual, and global engagement through Mercy International Association, its expanded Mercy International Centre, and other organizations.

Foster increased participation of women in leadership and policy-formation.

Use the new technologies to enable the fire of Mercy to shape anew our local Mercy ministries and to increase our collaboration in global projects.

Share our Mercy human and financial resources to facilitate this praxis.



Mercy – Kindling

These now follow out into the Mercy world, inviting you, in all your various locations, to continue the spiral, undertaking your theological reflection processes in dialogue with what has begun here. This ongoing process we name “**Mercy – Kindling**”.

The proceedings of the Conference were summarized in a report which was produced in book form with the title: “**Fire Cast on the Earth – Kindling**”: **Being Mercy in the twenty-first Century**. The research papers are available on the Mercyworld.org website.



PROPOSAL FROM THEOLOGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In December 2013, the Theological Advisory Group, which functioned as an advisory committee to the Mercy Global Action groups working on Trafficking and Cosmology, began conversations about the possibility of creating “Burlingame 2.” The members of the Group assisting MGA in the theological reflection that MIA Leadership wished to accompany their action were Sisters Mary C. Sullivan, Patricia Fox, Elaine Wainwright, Margaret Farley, Janet Ruffing, Mary Kay Dobrovolny, Julia Upton, and Elizabeth Davis. The Committee was coordinated initially by Mary Purcell, Assistant Director Mercy Global Action, and later by her successor, Denise Boyle fmdm.

The impetus for the process which the Group envisioned came from two sources:

- cosmological discoveries which are raising new questions of the theological traditions in which we stand as women of mercy within the church and society. Many of our members are embracing the growing body of writings as scholars in theology, biblical studies and spirituality, engaging in the challenging task of bringing these new insights into dialogue with the tradition.
- the growing awareness of climate change which challenges us to take up an eco-justice ethic if we are to mitigate the most damaging effects of climate change and address the human and ecological miseries consequent on the rape of Earth and its natural resources.

The Group were convinced that rich Mercy resources – theologians, experiences in ministry, collective action to address injustices, connections globally – would make possible a unique contribution to the work that is happening at the global and local levels in relation to cosmology and justice. The envisioned international mercy reflection process could also provide ways for engaging and addressing the challenges and issues that the new cosmology and its profound link to eco-justice are bringing to light in Mercy communities, congregations, and international engagements. It would be guided by theologians as well as persons actively involved in ministry related to cosmology, eco-justice and social justice, all of whom would be in dialogue with scientists and ethicists addressing these issues. They recommended the four-stage theological reflection cycle used in the Burlingame Conference in 2007 (p. 7). To be successful, each stage of the process would engage the women religious at the grassroots in Mercy Congregations/Institutes together with their partners in ministry.

The Theological Advisory Group made a formal proposal to the MIA Members and MIA Board of Directors on 12 February 2015: *Fanning the Flame of Mercy: Creation Waiting in Eager Longing ~ Proposed Mercy International Reflection Process*. The recommended international reflection process had three goals: (i) to draw on rich Mercy resources – theologians, experiences in ministry, collective action to address injustices, connections globally – to make a contribution to the work that is happening at the global and local levels in relation to cosmology and justice; (ii) to provide ways for engaging and addressing the challenges and issues that the new cosmology and its link to eco-justice are bringing to light in our Mercy communities, congregations and international engagements; and (iii) to further develop and deepen the connections which we have been steadily building across the Mercy world.

After considerable study and conversation, the decision was made by Mercy International Association to implement the Mercy International Reflection Process in 2015. It was seen as a key project for the Mercy international world through 2015-2016 in anticipation of the 25th anniversary of MIA. That timing would also enable Sisters of Mercy as an international group to participate in and to strengthen our response to Pope Francis’ call to the universal church to make ‘mercy’ its core virtue, especially in the Year of Consecrated Life. The year 2015 also marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Catherine’s being named Venerable. However, circumstances delayed the timing of the Mercy International Reflection Process which was clearly the work of the Spirit. At their May 2015 annual meeting, the MIA Board and Members announced the implementation of the *Mercy International Reflection Process* to begin on 08 December 2015 and to conclude on 12 December 2016. Immediately after this decision was made, Pope Francis proclaimed the *Year of Mercy* for 2016 (11 May 2015) and promulgated his encyclical *Laudato Si’* (24 May 2015).

MERCY INTERNATIONAL REFLECTION PROCESS

08 December 2015 – 12 December 2016

Introduction

The President of MIA, Berneice Loch rsm, and the Chair of the MIA Board, Patricia McDermott rsm, **invited** all Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy to participate in the Mercy International Reflection Process which began on 08 December 2015 and concluded on 12 December 2016.

The **Mercy International Reflection Process** (MIRP) was overseen by a Guiding Team of three (Elaine Wainwright rsm – International Director, Helen Diviney rsm – International Coordinator, and Anne Walsh – MIA Communications Director), with ten Institute/Congregation Coordinators (Sandra Lupi rsm – Brisbane Congregation, Natalie Murphy rsm, Teresa Anderson rsm and Kathleen Rushton rsm – Aotearoa New Zealand, Sheila Curran rsm – The Congregation, Patricia McMahon rsm – Great Britain Union, Adele Howard rsm – ISMAPNG, Elizabeth Marrie rsm – Newfoundland, Marianne Comfort – Americas, Valda Dickinson rsm – Parramatta & North Sydney, Josephine Davies rsm – Great Britain Institute, Carmela Cabactulan rsm – Philippines). Additional support was provided by Mary Reynolds rsm – Executive Director MIA and Elizabeth Davis rsm – MIA Members' Liaison.



Back Row L-R: Anne Walsh, Sandra Lupi rsm, Mary Reynolds rsm, Elizabeth Davis rsm, Teresa Anderson rsm, Elaine Wainwright rsm, Sheila Curran rsm, Patricia McMahon rsm, Adele Howard sm, Natalie Murphy rsm
Front Row L-R: Elizabeth Marrie rsm, Marianne Comfort rsm, Valda Dickinson rsm, Josephine Davies rsm, Helen Diviney rsm
Absent: Carmela Cabactulan rsm, Kathleen Rushton rsm

Process

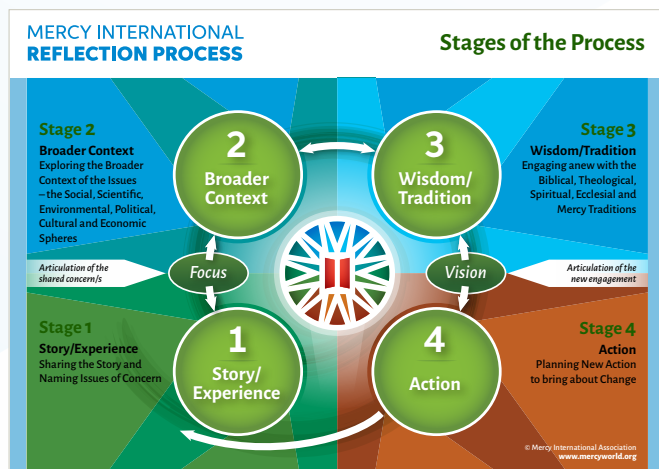
The Mercy International Reflection Process followed the theological reflection spiral used at the Burlingame Conference, slightly adapted. The process (shown in the diagram below) engaged participants in four movements which are cyclical: beginning with experience; analyzing that experience in a broader 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 logo was designed in English and Spanish specifically for the four-stage reflection process. At the centre of the logo were the rich red open Doors of Baggot Street, symbol of the commitment to be open to the needs of the world and hospitable to all who visit Mercy International Centre, the 'home place' for all in Mercy. It is through these doors that Sisters first went out to make new foundations in places near and far, taking with them Catherine McAuley's dream of showing mercy and compassion to those most in need. The twelve Congregations and Institutes that form Mercy International Association are represented in the rays that radiate outward from and 'return' to Baggot Street. The 40 plus countries where Sisters of Mercy and their partners in Mercy minister today, are represented by the circle, evoking both our internationality and Earth 'our common home' (*Laudato Si'*, 1).

The star shape in the background of the process diagram is emphasised with a white radiance extending out from the MIRP logo to all four stages of the process. This represents the ongoing element of prayer, ritual and celebration which is integral to the process and to all aspects of the faith community to which the groups belong. The order and symmetry in the logo design reflect the concern to address the cries of both Earth and People, as well as the commitment to restoring balance and harmony. The colours and shape of the logo suggest a stained glass rose window.

The group met in Dublin from 28 September to 01 October 2015 to develop their facility with the process and ways to implement it. On their return to their congregations or institutes, Coordinators engaged 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 Mercy eNews and on the Mercyworld.org website.

Coincident with the beginning of the Mercy International Reflection process in December 2015 was the opening of the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome – the Basilica of Saint John Lateran – by Pope Francis on 13 December 2015 to mark the Third Sunday of Advent and the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Pope Francis invited dioceses and churches across the globe to join him in this symbolic gesture to reinforce the theme of the Year of Mercy. The MIA Board made the decision to link the Foundation Day celebrations on 12 December 2015 to the opening of the Door of 64A Lower Baggot Street – Mercy International Centre, the first House of Mercy. The Board also invited Sisters of Mercy around the world to symbolically open doors in their communities and ministries during early December.



A ritual was prepared by Sheila Carney rsm (Americas) to use at Baggot Street and was made available for Sisters to use locally. The ritual, in incorporating the two songs from the Vigil prayer that commenced the 20th Anniversary celebrations at Baggot Street in 2014, drew on that newfound sense of global connection as it introduced the third year in a rich three-year cycle of global Mercy reflection: **20th Anniversary** (2014), **Year of Consecrated Life** (2015), and **Year of Mercy** (2016). Sisters were invited to send images of their symbolic openings to Baggot Street. The extent to which Sisters and partners in Mercy globally were engaged in this symbolic gesture was both heart-warming and affirming of the engagement with the Mercy International Reflection Process.

One of the especially rich resources was developed to support Stage Three of the Process: the exploration of the issues raised in our groups in response to the theme, 'The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor', in light of biblical, theological, spiritual, ecclesial and mercy tradition (scripture, theology, spirituality, ethics and the writings of Catherine McAuley). Fourteen scholars and other experts in the USA, Ireland and Australia were invited to share their knowledge and insights through video interviews (Denis Edwards, Elaine Wainwright rsm, Elizabeth



Johnson csj, John F. Haught, Julia Upton rsm, Patricia Powell rsm, Scholasticah Nganda rsm, Seán McDonagh ssc, Margaret Farley rsm, Mary C. Sullivan rsm, Mary Reynolds rsm, Nellie McLaughlin rsm, Veronica Lawson rsm, and Sheila Curran rsm). The fourteen scholars included biblical scholars, theologians, and Mercy scholars, among whom were representatives of the MIA Board, the MIRP advisory and cross-cultural committees, and the MIRP coordinating group as well as experts outside the Mercy family. The set of interviews, conducted on location by Adele Howard rsm (ISMAPNG) and archived on the mercyworld website, is entitled **VOICES**.

Hundreds of groups and almost five thousand Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy participated in the Reflection Process. Two hundred sixty-five groups formally reported to the Guiding Team. 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. 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. **The final report** of the process, entitled *Review of Mercy International Reflection Process: What has been discovered? What had been revealed?* (21 April 2017), was presented in two distinct but intersecting sections.



Hundreds of groups and almost five thousand Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy participated in the Reflection Process.

Fruits of the Process

What has been discovered?—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. The chart below shows the identification of issues across the many groups.

ISSUE	Combined Groups	ISMAPNG	NTH SYD	PARRA	BRIS	SMA USA	CONG IRE	NWAA NZ	RSM NL	RSM PHI	UK Un	UK Inst
DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS	119											
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	24	2		4	1	3	3	2	5	4		
Human Trafficking	6	3		1		1						1
Violence/ Domestic Violence	6	1		1		1		1		2		
DEGRADATION OF EARTH	155											
Environmental Devastation: Effects of cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes	27	3		5	4		6	6		2		1
Water	52	27				11	5	2	5		1	1
Sustainable Living	46	12	1	6	2	5	11	6	3			
Fracking	6	4			1	1						
Garbage/ Pollution	24	10	1	1		1		5	2	2	2	
TOTAL GROUPS	274	92	4	27	9	27	43	30	21	10	7	4

Emerging Issues Chart. Version 1 was first published in MIRP Review document, 21 April 2017

What has been revealed?—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. It was imagined that *Mercy Global Presence* 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.

Three symbols emerged to bring more clarity about this *Mercy Global Presence*: the holon, the butterfly and the global heart. In the **MIRP 6 Month Update**, Sisters and partners in Mercy were encouraged to explore one of the three symbols from the MIRP Report to creatively deepen the image (in poetry, in painting, in sculpture...) and to share their artistic work with the Mercy world by 11 November 2017. A number of creative pieces were received from individuals and circle groups in Newfoundland.

The engagement of many would be needed to create this new organic entity which is *Mercy Global Presence*. In the final report, invitations encouraging accountability for shaping the vision were 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.

Conclusion

The actions that the groups 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.

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.

Immediate Follow-Up Steps

The key moments in the Mercy International Reflection Process were archived in videos and written materials and are maintained on the **Mercyworld.org website**.

The Mercy World's understanding of *Mercy Global Presence* was deepened by the many ministries centered on degradation of Earth and displacement of persons. To maintain the momentum begun by the Reflection Process, commencing 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) were identified as pivotal moments for global communication and reflection.

The Mercy leaders from the Asia Pacific focused on *Mercy Global Presence* and asked Adele Howard rsm (ISMAPNG) to produce a **guidebook** as a basis for moving forward. Several Mercy Congregations and Institutes embraced *Mercy Global Presence* in their conversations and in their Chapter statements. The Mercyworld.org website was rebuilt during 2018. In November 2018, the new **MIA Vision Statement** was created, and *Mercy Global Presence* was held in its very centre. The Vision is presented in eight languages: English, Irish, Spanish, Maori, Samoan, Tok Pisin, Tagalog and Tongan, honouring Mercy's presence in 6 continents of the world - Africa, Americas, Australia, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.





Mercy International Association Vision Statement

Deeply rooted in the Gospel and the legacy of Catherine McAuley, Mercy International Association seeks to gather the inspiration and energies of the Sisters of Mercy, our associates, colleagues and partners worldwide toward the creation of a Mercy Global Presence. Standing with the displaced, we will model a world of welcome and inclusion. Actively engaged in the protection of our Common Home, we will witness to the sacredness of all creation. Through the work of the Association and through the longings and efforts of the entire Mercy family, we will strive for the globalization of compassion and the recognition of God's mercy as present and active in our world.

This vision keeps alive the Founding Spirit of Catherine among people of the World most in need of God's compassion and Mercy.

Mercy Global Presence

OVERVIEW

29 September 2019 – 30 June 2021

Introduction

Following the introduction of the phrase, *Mercy Global Presence*, and encouraged by the immediate steps taken, Mercy Global Presence began to have more tangible shape as an organic entity and a counter-cultural sign in a globalised world which has made more extreme the displacement of persons and degradation of Earth. It was seen as a way of linking congregations/institutes, individual Sisters of Mercy and Associates, partners in Mercy, and Mercy International Association in creative and energising ways. It promised a journey of new learning for transformation through a new theology, new images of God, a new language, and new conversations.

On 13 March 2019, Mercy International Association announced the development of a new process to engage the Mercy world in global contemplation, moving to shape the new words, new language, new spirituality, and new theology. Through *Mercy eNews* and the newly revised *Mercyworld.org* website, a sixteen-month global exploration of **Mercy Global Presence** was presented, inviting the engagement of Sisters of Mercy and partners in Mercy worldwide. The framework for the exploration reflected a new unfolding of the four movements in the spiral of the Mercy International Reflection Process and earlier Burlingame Conference: personal experience, social context, link with the tradition, and new vision. It was rooted in the conviction that Mercy Global Presence is alive and active in the ministries of all our Sisters and partners in Mercy, in the many connections and collaborations in which we are engaged, and in our increased awareness of the rich diversity among us. Multiple cultures and languages were threaded throughout this exploration with special emphasis on the power and promise of intercultural wisdom and energy.



The leaders of the Mercy Global Presence process were subsequently named (pictured left to right):

- *the Guiding Team*: Elizabeth Davis rsm (Liaison for MIA Members), Mary Reynolds rsm/Berneice Loch rsm (CEO of MIA), and Anne Walsh (Communications, MIA)
- *Coordinators*: Adele Howard rsm – ISMAPNG, Carmel McDonough rsm – North Sydney, Diane Smyth rsm and Elizabeth Marrie rsm – Newfoundland, Josephine Davies rsm – GB Institute, Judith Moroney rsm and Jeanette Mathers rsm/Paula Anamani rsm – Aotearoa New Zealand, Marian Ladrera rsm – Philippines, Marianne Comfort – Americas, Patricia McMahon rsm – GB Union, Sandra Lupi rsm – Brisbane, Sheila Curran rsm – The Congregation (Ireland), Valda Dickinson rsm – Parramatta

The logo from Mercy International Reflection Process was slightly adapted with the words Mercy Global Presence in English and Spanish:



Timeline

A timeline of Segments and Themes was made available through Mercy eNews and on the [Mercyworld.org](https://www.mercyworld.org) website.

Timeline of Segments and Themes

Segment One: Global	Release date
Cosmos/Cosmology	29 September 2019
Earth and Integral Ecology	30 October 2019
People and Deep Social Change	27 November 2019
Incarnate God in Cosmos and in Person of Jesus	18 December 2019
Segment Two: Mercy	
Faith Traditions and Mercy	25 March 2020
Mercy and the Degradation of Earth	29 April 2020
Mercy and the Displacement of Persons	27 May 2020
New Foundations in Mercy	24 June 2020
Segment Three: Presence	
Presence of/with/to God	30 September 2020
Presence to Earth	28 October 2020
Presence in Community and Ministry	25 November 2020
Presence to Self and Others	16 December 2020
Segment Four: Integrated	
Contemplative Seeing	31 March 2021
Compassionate Heart	28 April 2021
Mercying	26 May 2021
Creating Circles and A Culture of Mercy	30 June 2021

Process

Personal and Small Group Reflections

Sisters were invited to become engaged themselves and to encourage others (Sisters and partners in Mercy) to join them through designated responders, comments or blogs on the new website, gathering in small groups for reflection, and informal reporting of gatherings and learnings to MIA. The process unfolded in four-month segments respecting holiday times in the two hemispheres:

- From September 2019 to December 2019, the focus was “global” as the context in which all mercying happens – cosmology, integral ecology, deep social change, and the incarnate God.
- In the beginnings of the global pandemic from March 2020 to June 2020, “mercy” – God’s mercy, Earth’s mercy, and our mercy – was explored through major faith traditions, degradation of Earth, displacement of persons, and mercy visible in our time.
- From September 2020 to December 2020, attention to “presence” – to, with and of God; of and to Earth, in ministry and community, and oneself and others – dared us to move as boundary crossers to the fringes where the newness will be found.
- From March 2021 to June 2021 was the fourth and last segment which focused on “integration” and completed the weaving of new patterns through contemplative seeing, a compassionate heart, mercying, and the creating of circles and a culture of mercy.

Each month brought its own rhythm: an opening video setting the context and inviting engagement; reflections from theologians, artists, grassroots ministers, global thinkers, scientists, and distinct voices from the Mercy world with opportunities for reflective prayer; and an invitation to engagement in personal reflection, small group conversations, and blogs or comments on the website. Musings for the journey, advice for facilitators of small groups, and “Good Reading” (additional articles, videos, and paintings) provided further resources for advice and reflection. Each congregation and institute were invited to use this exploration as a resource as they live out their unique Chapter statements and congregational journeys.

At the end of each segment, **posters and accompanying reflection guides** were created for each month’s theme (sixteen in total), showing the voices and images of all those whose work constituted the presentations. These posters, produced in English and Spanish, provided an artistic lens through which to see the centering of the theme in a single glance.



Regional Online Gatherings

Supplementing the personal and small group reflections were regional online gatherings held virtually on Zoom at key moments in the process. Recognizing the time differences for such gatherings, three were chosen (the Pacific region; North and South America; and Ireland, the United Kingdom and Africa):

1. July–September 2020

- Twelve global conversations on four themes
- Total of 1008 Mercy women and men over the four gatherings (July 27-30, August 10-13, 25-27; September 8-9)
- 17 countries represented: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Guam, Guyana, Honduras, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States

2. Living Cosmic Advent Wreath (December 2020):

- 203 Mercy women and men from 12 countries

3. 24-27 May 2021 – Pentecost Week

- Focus on “contemplative seeing” and “a contemplative heart”
- 180 participants from twelve countries: Australia, Canada, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Aotearoa New Zealand, Peru, Argentina, Cambodia, Guam, and South Africa

For the participants, the six sets of regional gatherings were times for sacred conversations, for prophesying, and for truly global contemplation. They were grounded in the belief that braiding texts, distinct voices, different genres, and other art forms with ecological worldviews (Indigenous, scientific, and religious) can create new understanding and deepening wisdoms about the world and our place in it.

The first three segments of the MGP process began that braiding which continued through the four new themes of the fourth segment. The final set of regional gatherings was especially important since it was focused on “integration.” The regional gatherings were a living experience of the braiding of diverse voices and writings and art into new images of God, new language, new theologies, and a renewed spirituality bringing the Mercy family closer to the new weaving of mercy for the second decade of this twenty-first century.



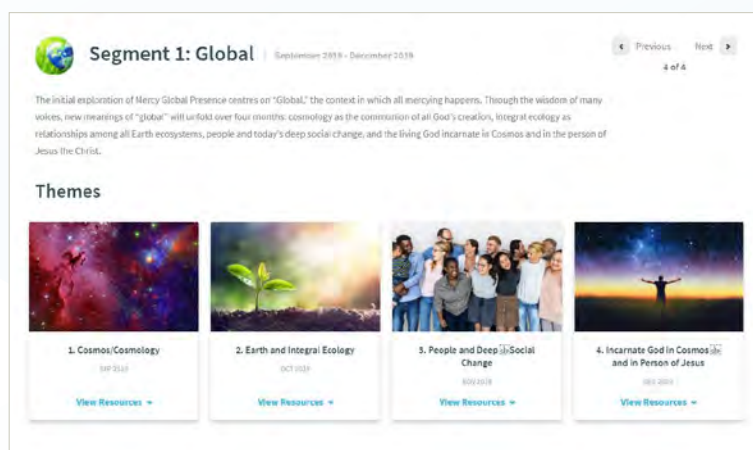
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THE FOUR MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE SEGMENTS

Segment One Focus: Global (September 2019 to December 2019)

In the first four months (through four themes in September - December 2019), we listened to many distinct voices singing the ground-shifting song of Cosmos (September), the lifegiving chant of integral ecology (October), the resounding melodies of humankind experiencing deep social change (November), and the joy-filled canticles of praise for the incarnation of our God in Cosmos and in the person of Jesus the Christ (December).

From 'panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form' (Laudato Si', 85), 'Global' at the centre of 'Mercy Global Presence' came alive with new wonder, new mystery and new meaning.



Theme One ~ Cosmos/Cosmology

- **Theological Imaginings:** Nellie McLaughlin rsm and Oonagh Campbell rsm (The Congregation): *Out of Wonder*
- **Artist:** Maree Hutchinson rsm (Brisbane Congregation): *Global Heart Global Heartbeat*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Anne Walsh (Newfoundland): *Glimpses of God: A Catechist Ponders A Few Questions Posed in Light of Cosmology*
- **Global Perspective:** Angela Reed rsm (MIA MGA): *Responding to a Cosmological Narrative and Praxis*
- **Distinct Voice:** Maya Angelou: *A Brave and Startling Truth*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Elizabeth Davis rsm (Newfoundland): *Cosmos*



Theme Two ~ Earth and Integral Ecology

- **Theological Imaginings:** Mary C. Sullivan rsm (Americas): *Earth and Integral Ecology*
- **Artist:** Margaret Milne rsm, Cheryl Connelly rsm, Teresa Anderson rsm (Aotearoa New Zealand): *The Global Heartbeat*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Maryanne Kolkia rsm (ISMAPNG): *The Connectedness of God's Creation*
- **Global Perspective:** Angela Reed rsm (MIA MGA): *Young Global Activists and their interconnectedness with Earth*
- **Distinct Voice:** Tara Egger (North Sydney): *Aboriginal Elder, Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Anne Curtis rsm (Americas): *Earth and Integral Ecology*



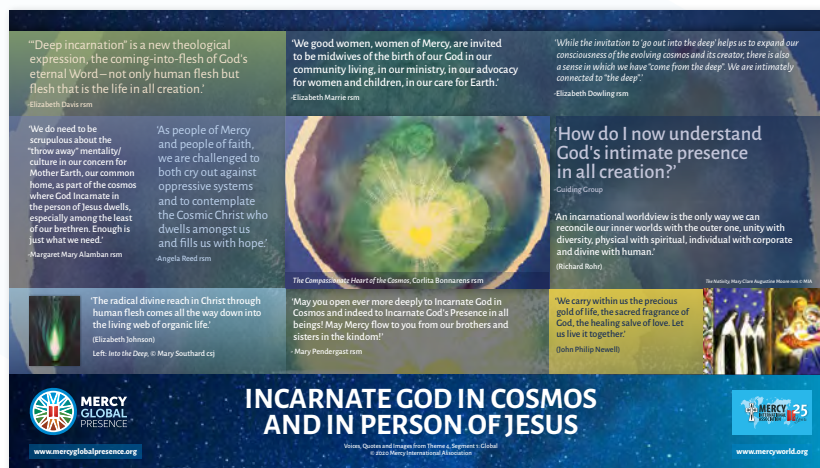
Theme Three ~ People and Deep Social Change

- **Theological Imaginings:** Julia Upton rsm (Americas): *Deep Social Change*
- **Artist:** Mary White rsm (Parramatta): *"S"* ~ *Process Journal*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Susan Browne rsm (GB Institute): *Addressing Homelessness*
- **Global Perspective:** Angela Reed rsm (MIA MGA): *Making "the Shift" on Global Homelessness*
- **Distinct Voice:** Ailish O'Brien rsm (The Congregation), Nicole Moran, and Nyokabi Kahura: *From South Sudan*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Carmel McDonough rsm (North Sydney), *People and Deep Social Change*



Theme Four ~ Incarnate God in Cosmos and in Person of Jesus

- **Theological Imaginings:** Elizabeth Dowling rsm (ISMAPNG): *Putting Out Into the Deep*
- **Artist:** Corlita Bonnarens rsm (Americas): *The Compassionate Heart of the Cosmos*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Margaret Mary Alamban rsm (Philippines): *Incarnate God in Cosmos and in Person of Jesus*
- **Global Perspective:** Angela Reed rsm (MIA MGA): *Contemplating the Cosmic Christ in a time of Global Turmoil*
- **Distinct Voice:** Mary Pendergast rsm (Americas): *In Mercy Woods*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Elizabeth Marrie rsm (Newfoundland): *Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, Peace*

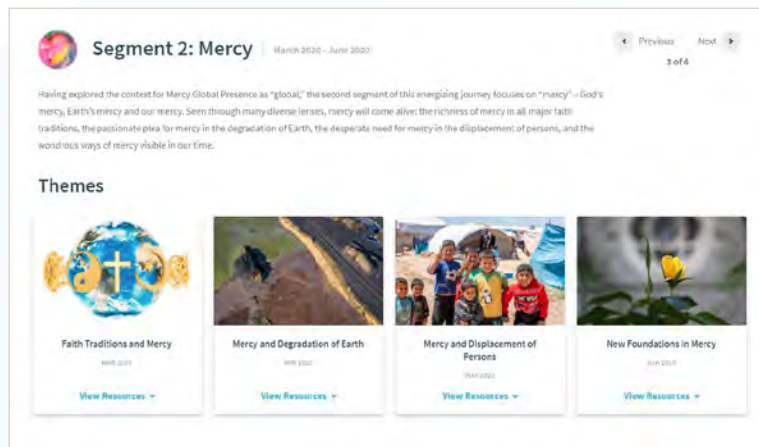


Summary

The initial exploration of Mercy Global Presence centred on “Global,” the context in which all mercying happens. Through the wisdom of many voices, new meanings of “global” unfolded over four months: cosmology as the communion of all God's creation, integral ecology as relationships among all Earth ecosystems, people and today's deep social change, and the living God incarnate in Cosmos and in the person of Jesus the Christ.

Segment Two Focus: Mercy (March 2020 to June 2020)

In the next four months (through four themes in March–June 2020), the second segment of our journey into Mercy Global Presence deepened our love and passion for mercy. We delighted in the rich and varied expressions of mercy through all the major faith traditions (March). We lamented the desperate need for mercy in the tragic degradation of Earth (April). We saw mercy threaded through the torn lives of persons displaced as individuals, as communities and as peoples (May). We rejoiced in the wondrous continued and new ways in which mercy is visible in our time (June). As Mary Wickham rsm prays in her Litany of Mercy, we celebrated the colour, the shape, the mystery and the arenas of mercy.



Theme One ~ Mercy and Faith Traditions

- **Theological Imaginings:** Peta Goldburg rsm (Brisbane): *Mercy and Faith Traditions*
- **Artist:** Anne Reddington rsm (GB Union): *Table of Mercy* & Maureen Murphy rsm (GB Union): *Who are we if not kin?*
- **Grassroots Minister:** CCASA Prophetic Voice Commission (Americas): *Message of The Prophetic Voice Commission*
- **Global Perspective:** Mary Tee rsm (Newfoundland): *Alternatives to Violence: Bringing Together the Wisdoms of Indigenous Peoples and Faith Traditions*
- **Distinct Voice:** Sharon Collins (Brisbane): *St. Saviour's College: Mercy and Faith Traditions*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Bridget Crisp rsm (Aotearoa New Zealand): *Mercy and Faith Traditions*



Theme Two ~ Mercy and the Degradation of Earth

- **Theological Imaginings:** Carmody Grey (GB Institute): *Ecological Mercy*
- **Artist:** Mary Bilderback rsm (Americas): *Mercy and the Degradation of Earth ~ The Birds of Home Depot*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Gabrielle Scanlon (Parramatta): *Mercy and the Degradation of Earth*
- **Global Perspective:** Bridget Crisp rsm (Aotearoa New Zealand): *Degradation of the Earth: The Impact on the Planet Seen Through the Works of Mercy*
- **Distinct Voice:** Margie Abbott rsm (ISMAPNG): *"We are in Need of Respirators Urgently!" Thus cry out the Oceans of the World*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Adele Howard rsm (ISMAPNG): *Everything is Connected*



Theme Three ~ Mercy and the Displacement of Persons

- **Theological Imaginings:** Margaret Hinchey rsm (Parramatta): *Mercy and the Displacement of Persons*
- **Artist:** Margaret Smith rsm (ISMAPNG): *Reclaiming Place: Continuing the Story*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Malia Fetuli rsm (Aotearoa New Zealand): *Mercy and the Displacement of Persons*
- **Global Perspective:** Carmen Rosa Ccallomamani rsm (Americas): *Migrants*
- **Distinct Voice:** Margie Taylor rsm (Newfoundland): *The Body Holds the Story*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Sheila Curran rsm (The Congregation): *Mercy and the Displacement of Persons*



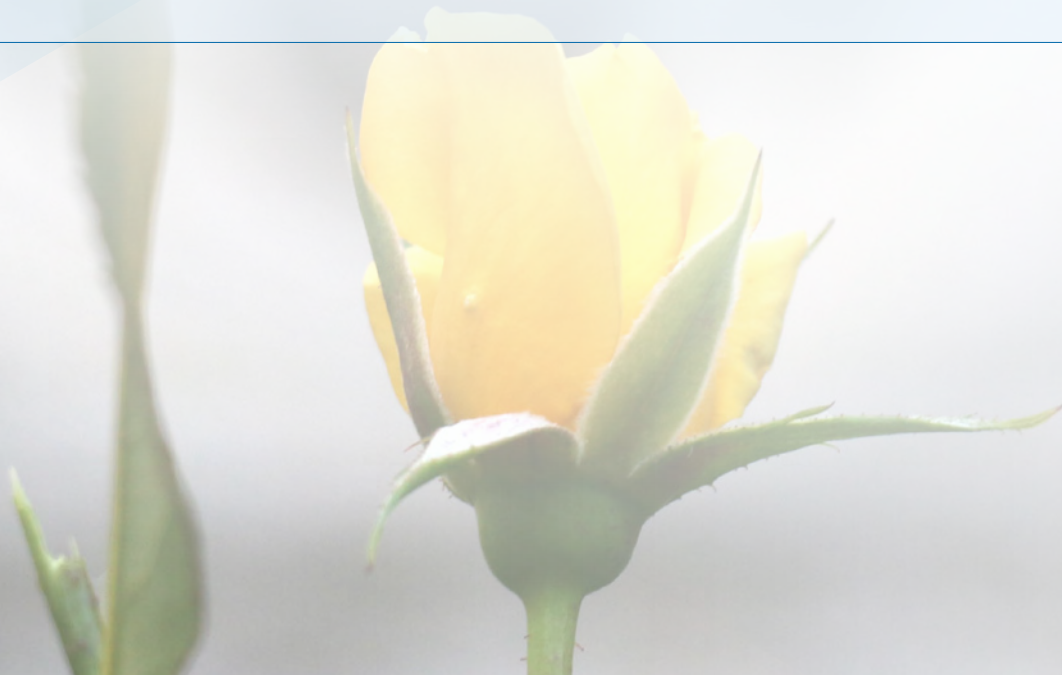
Theme Four ~ New Foundations in Mercy

- **Theological Imaginings:** Dennis Horton (Aotearoa New Zealand): *New Foundations in Mercy*
- **Artist:** Sophie Snowball (Great Britain Federation): *Plastic Coated*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Anne Maria O'Carroll rsm (The Congregation): *New Foundations in Mercy*
- **Global Perspective:** Marianne Comfort (Americas): *New Foundations in Mercy*
- **Distinct Voice:** Members of Mercy Focus on Haiti (Americas): *New Foundations in Mercy*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Mary Anne Nolan rsm (Americas): *The Wondrous Ways of Mercy*



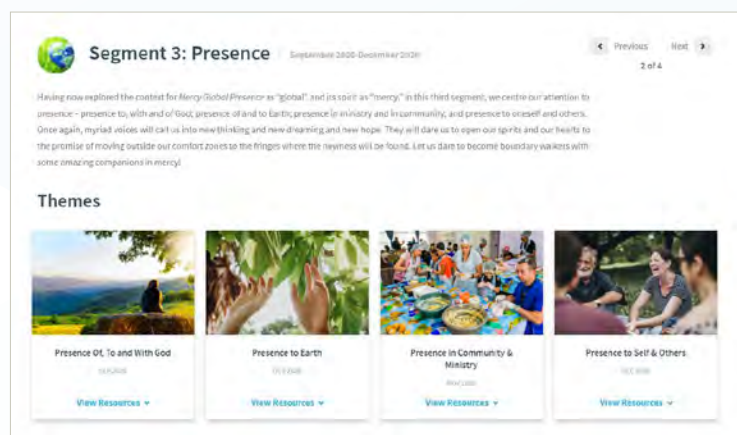
Summary

Having explored the context for Mercy Global Presence as “global,” the second segment of this energizing journey focused on “mercy”—God’s mercy, Earth’s mercy, and our mercy. Seen through many diverse lenses, mercy came alive: the richness of mercy in all major faith traditions, the passionate plea for mercy in the degradation of Earth, the desperate need for mercy in the displacement of persons, and the wondrous ways of mercy visible in our time.



Segment Three Focus: Presence (September 2020-December 2020)

In a time of social distancing, mask wearing and social isolation, we commenced our exploration of “presence” in segment three of Mercy Global Presence. For the next four months (September 2020 to December 2020), we focused more intentionally on presence in a time when we were warned that physical presence can spread a virus that is challenging our health, our economy, our livelihoods, our safety, and our well-being. We began by deepening our emerging understandings of the presence of God in the cosmos, on Earth and in our hearts (September). In the wisdom of integral ecology, we explored the meaning of presence of Earth and to Earth for humans and all Earth creatures (October). With a growing appreciation of the changing face of the global mercy family, we reflected on presence in ministry and in community during a pandemic time (November). In our final month in this segment (December) when we were especially sensitive to incarnation, we attended to presence to oneself. Threaded through all reflections was a sense of borders or boundaries or fringes as places with the promise of connection, new relationships, and new growth. In the words from *Gaudete et Exsultate* (#135): “Unafraid of the fringes, Jesus himself became a fringe (cf. Phil 2:6-8; Jn 1:14). So, if we dare to go to the fringes, we will find him there.”



Theme One ~ Presence of/with/to God

- **Theological Imaginings:** Mary-Paula Cancienne rsm (Americas): *Presence*
- **Artist:** Marilyn Brown rsm (The Congregation): *Presence of/with/to God*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Maura Walsh rsm (The Congregation): *Presence of God*
- **Global Perspective:** Amanda Carrier rsm (Americas): *Presence of/with/to God*
- **Distinct Voice:** Agnes Hunter rsm (The Congregation): *Presence of/with/to God*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Josephine Davies rsm and Cathy Edge rsm (Great Britain Institute): *Presence of/with/to God*



Theme Two ~ Presence to Earth

- **Theological Imaginings:** Mary Tinney rsm (ISMAPNG): *Presence to Earth*
- **Artist:** Carmel Bracken rsm (The Congregation): *A 2020 Vision*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Michael Cross (Americas): *Presence of Earth and to Earth for humans and all Earth creatures*
- **Global Perspective:** Colleen Swain (MIA MGA): *Reborn from the Ashes*
- **Distinct Voice:** Dominique Marendy (Parramatta): *Presence to Earth*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Judith Moroney rsm, Paula Anamani rsm, and Cheryl Connelly rsm (Aotearoa New Zealand): *Presence of and to Earth*



Theme Three ~ Presence in Community and Ministry

- **Theological Imaginings:** Elizabeth Davis rsm (Newfoundland): *Presence in Community & Ministry*
- **Artist:** Michael Pacto rsm (Philippines): *Presence in Community & Ministry*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Marie O'Dea rsm (Great Britain Union): *The Homeless Jesus*
- **Global Perspective:** Cecile Kern (MIA MGA): *Embracing a Culture of Encounter*
- **Distinct Voice:** Michelle Goh rsm (ISMAPNG): *Presence in Community & Ministry*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Marian Ladrera rsm (Philippines): *Reflection on Ecclesiastes 3:1-13*



Theme Four ~ Presence to Self & Others

- **Theological Imaginings:** Carmela Cabactulan rsm (Philippines): *Presence to Self & Others*
- **Artist:** Catherine Elliott (North Sydney): *The Mercy Effect ~ Women Empowering Women*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Ali Roach rsm (ISMAPNG): *Presence to Ministry*
- **Global Perspective:** Siobhán Golden (MIA MGA): *Cultivating a sense of belonging amid pandemic*
- **Distinct Voice:** Edia (Tita) Lopez (Americas): *Barro Blanco Project*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Patricia McMahon rsm and Annette McCartan rsm (Great Britain Union): *Presence to Self & Others*



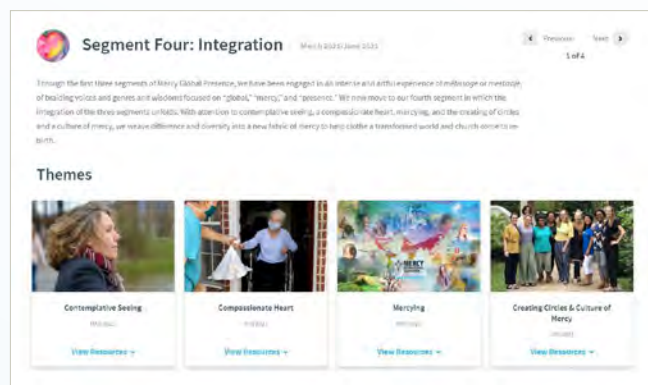
Summary

Having explored the context for Mercy Global Presence as “global” and its spirit as “mercy,” in this third segment, we centred our attention to presence—presence to, with and of God; presence of and to Earth; presence in ministry and in community; and presence to oneself. Once again, myriad voices called us into new thinking and new dreaming and new hope. They dared us to open our spirits and our hearts to the promise of moving outside our comfort zones to the fringes where the newness will be found. We dared to become boundary walkers with some amazing companions in mercy!

Segment Four Focus: Integrated (March 2021 to June 2021)

Literary *métissage* (Spanish *mestizaje*) generates new knowledge through writing and braiding texts and other art forms. It embraces distinct voices, uses different genres, and reclaims many wisdoms. Ecological *métissage* adapts the same blending of diversity with ecological worldviews (indigenous, scientific, and religious). *Métissage* invites the reader or the listener to pursue many paths through the texts, art forms and worldviews. In this way, it generates new understanding and wisdom about the world and our place in it.

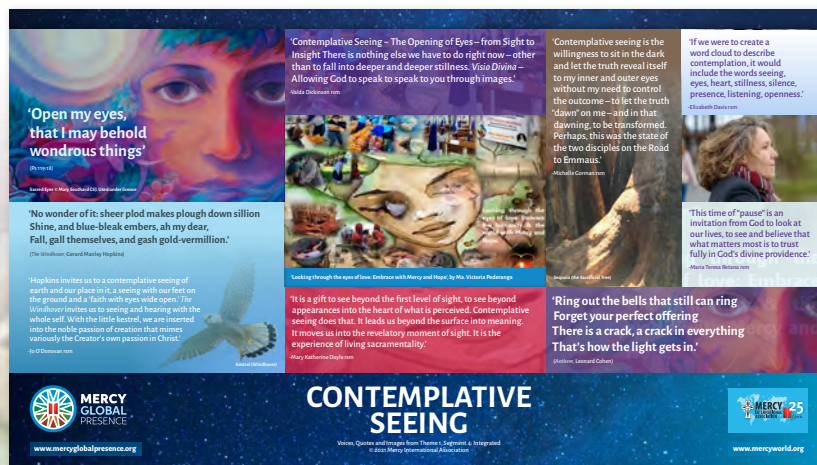
The first three segments of Mercy Global Presence were an intense experience of *métissage* across the Mercy world. From September 2019 to December 2019, the focus was “global” as the context in which all mercying happens – cosmology, integral ecology, deep social change, and the incarnate God. In the beginnings of the global pandemic from March 2020 to June 2020, “mercy” – God’s mercy, Earth’s mercy, and our mercy – was explored through major faith traditions, degradation of Earth, displacement of persons, and mercy visible in our time. From September 2020 to December 2020, attention to “presence” – to, with and of God; of and to Earth, in ministry and community, and oneself and others – dared us to move as boundary crossers to the fringes where the newness will be found.



Our fourth and last segment (March 2021 to June 2021) intensified the *métissage* as it completed the weaving of new patterns through contemplative seeing, a compassionate heart, mercying, and the creating of circles and a culture of mercy. In the braiding of differences, we endeavoured to help transform the post-pandemic world and church. Together, we created a new weaving of mercy, gathering the threads of our lived experience and resplendent in all the colours and textures of Earth.

Theme One ~ Contemplative Seeing

- **Theological Imaginings:** Mary Katherine Doyle rsm (Americas): *Contemplative Seeing*
- **Artist:** Ma Victoria Pederanga rsm (Philippines): *Looking through the eyes of love: Embrace with Mercy and Hope*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Jo O'Donovan rsm (The Congregation): *Contemplative Seeing in Hopkins' Windhover*
- **Global Perspective:** Michelle Gorman rsm (Americas): *Contemplative Seeing*
- **Distinct Voice:** Maria Teresa Retana (Philippines): *A "Misericordian" Response to these Difficult Times*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Valda Dickinson rsm (Parramatta): *Contemplative Seeing*



Theme Two ~ Compassionate Heart

- **Theological Imaginings:** Carmel McDonough rsm (North Sydney): *Compassionate Heart*
- **Artist:** Larretta Rivera-Williams rsm (Americas): *If I Were A Mirror, What Would I See?*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Stephanie Langley, Jemima Welsh, and Rebecca Goodyear (Brisbane): *160th Anniversary of All Hallows School*
- **Global Perspective:** Julia Morisi (Americas): *Compassionate Heart*
- **Distinct Voice:** Richard Kerr-Bell (Aotearoa New Zealand): *A Compassionate Heart*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Sandra Lupi rsm (Brisbane): *Can you Hear the Heartbeat?*



Theme Three ~ Mercying

- **Theological Imaginings:** Mary C. Sullivan rsm (Americas): *Mercying*
- **Artist:** Congregation of Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland: *Ceramic Works of Mercy in Newfoundland* by Artist Gerald Squires
- **Grassroots Minister:** Congregation of Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland: *Grassroots Ministry in Peru*
- **Global Perspective:** Elizabeth MacNeal (MIA Heritage): *Mercying*
- **Distinct Voice:** Theresia Tina rsm (ISMAPNG): *Mercying – a challenge in the time of Pandemic in Papua New Guinea*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Jean Adam rsm and Carolyn McWatters rsm (Americas): *Touched by God's Mercy, we reach out in Mercy*



Theme Four ~ Creating Circles of Mercy and A Culture of Mercy

- **Theological Imaginings:** Victoria Biggs (GB Union): *Cultivating Mercy*
- **Artist:** Tara Eggar (North Sydney): *Mercy is Like a Circle*
- **Grassroots Minister:** Anne Francis (The Congregation): *A Circle on the Face of the Deep*
- **Global Perspective:** Tylia Barnes (Americas): *Wonderful Circles of Mercy*
- **Distinct Voice:** Scholasticah Nganda rsm (The Congregation): *Solidarity with South Sudan*
- **Reflective Prayer:** Sandra Lupi rsm (Brisbane): *Through the Eyes of Mercy*



Summary

Through the first three segments of Mercy Global Presence, we were engaged in an intense and artful experience of *métissage* or *mestizaje*, of braiding voices and genres and wisdoms focused on "global," "mercy," and "presence." We moved to our fourth segment in which the integration of the three segments unfolded. With attention to contemplative seeing, a compassionate heart, mercying, and the creating of circles and a culture of mercy, we wove difference and diversity into a new fabric of mercy to help clothe a transformed world and church come to re-birth.

For all sixteen themes:

- **Introduction:** Elizabeth Davis rsm (Newfoundland)
- **Musings for the Journey:** Anne Walsh (Australia)
- **Facilitators' Guide and Good Reading:** Anne Walsh (Australia)

DIVERSE LEVELS AND MANNER OF PARTICIPATION

Local Gatherings

Seven of the twelve congregations/institutes reported as follows

- Range from 5 to 75 gatherings for each congregation/institute.
- Based on the reports from six congregations/institutes only, there were approximately 249 local group gatherings with more than 5000 participants.
- Two modes: Zoom and in-person gatherings.
- Variety of gatherings:
 - personal engagement (70 participants) = circle groups (6-10 members), community meetings/ prayer (2- 6 members), large community meeting (12 to 25 participants)
 - Zoom congregation-wide (60 participants from Canada and Peru)
 - Zoom gatherings open to all Mercys throughout the Institute (from the US, Latin America and the Philippines)
 - People initially gathered for provincial workshops or reflection days
 - In larger communities, people met in small groups
 - We had sisters from our Congregation who minister and live in Ireland and Cambodia join in every time and this gave them a better sense of connection especially since they cannot come home during the Pandemic
 - During the severe Lockdowns of the Covid Pandemic in 2020, this program was a source of connection, continuity, hope and reflection for many participants
 - The Sisters have been gathering regularly at Congregational meetings—lockdown restrictions permitting and at these meeting many of the prayers from the different themes were used
 - As the Congregation is ageing, the number gathering for meetings is usually around the 20 mark and several of these women are in their late 80's 90's
 - We were a mixed group—Sisters and partners in Mercy from several different places. We met every 3 weeks, on a Wednesday for one and a half hours commencing at 3 pm. This continued right up to July 2021. We faithfully met and shared on a chosen segment and theme each month. We completed each of the Segments, and sometimes, we revisited themes, and segments.
 - The Earth Wisdom group of 8 reflected on the themes at their meetings.
 - The Province Interconnectedness Group also got involved in Mercy Global Presence. This group had been in existence for some years before Mercy Global Presence
 - Circle Groups met via Zoom to pray, reflect and share with the various contributions from around the Mercy world as well as focus on the posters
 - Sisters at the Mount (our largest community) met weekly to pray, reflect and share the MGP resources
 - In March and April 2020, St. Joseph's community met with a person in Australia and another in Ireland (via Zoom) to pray for those suffering from and for those assisting others in the Covid 19 pandemic

- Manner of presentation:
 - We gathered online every two weeks – one session was in the morning and the same session was at night to give Sisters choice of time. The facilitator would explain how to find the resources online using Zoom one week and then we shared our reflections on the theme in the next session
 - Each of the presenters from the congregation to MGP was invited to communicate – this was done via zoom with our Mercy Futures Group of sisters and partners
 - Sessions were prepared by presenter from wealth of material given with each theme
 - The gatherings were held in the Community Room. The meetings always included conversations as well as interpretations of Scripture Passages relevant to our lives
 - We transcribed some of the content into slides which helped to maintain attention and also to encourage selecting a quote and or a saying to take as a motto for the week or month. The Sisters were given handouts of some of the articles, not included in the meeting, for personal reflection
 - In preparing the meetings, we crossed all the themes and selected those which were most lifegiving and appropriate for the Group. The resources which illustrated the ministries of the Sisters who wrote gave us a sense of belonging to Mercy and allowed us to appreciate that the charism was alive.
 - An immediate result of the meetings was Sisters voicing their opinions on the script which sometimes included stories from their lives, something we tend to avoid at table conversations!
 - Each week a special article/note/advertisement re Mercy Global Presence was posted in Congregational Newsletter
 - Great follow-up from the MIRP which planted a good foundation for MGP.
 - The facilitator used PowerPoint, online video, conversation, small and large group sharing. At another meeting, we used Johanna Macy's "Spiral of the work that reconnects", as well as input, ritual and sharing at various levels.
 - We had one formal meeting with local leaders and our PLT to introduce MGP, share information on how to access the MGP site and encourage sisters to use the site in community meetings and for personal reflection. Subsequently, we had a workshop with two communities while local communities also had meetings using the wonderful information on the site
 - Given the interruptions caused by COVID curfews, the facilitator shared information via e-mail and whatsapp. She sent out reminders, highlighting topics of interest, before each new segment was put up on the website, to each individual sister and those to whom she had sent the website address.
 - To begin our participation a one-day IT training was given on how to navigate your way around the MGP website and possible ways to share the material. Nine Sisters attended and each agreed to teach another Sister how to access and use the MGP website. For each theme, a letter was sent out along with the prayer and the artistic expression; sometimes the article from grassroots ministry was included
 - A small team from the Institute of the Americas planned several Zoom gatherings in the final year of the process, when much programming was moved online. An average of 30-40 sisters and associates gathered with interpretation to enable participation from Central and South America. At each gathering, we reflected and shared together on one resource from that particular theme, occasionally bringing a contributor in to elaborate on her writing or piece of art and incorporating prayers and music from the process

● Use of Resources

- All the Sisters received a copy of the MGP posters as they were published as well as a copy of Elizabeth Davis' Introduction to the theme
- The resources were also shared with CEIST Catholic Education Trust, Dublin City Interfaith Forum, and Eco-Congregations Ireland
- The OLMC Parramatta teachers used resources
- A prayer contributed by Dennis Horton (New Zealand) was abridged and used in preparation for and throughout our 22nd General Chapter
- Sisters and partners were encouraged to engage with resources for each theme through our bi-weekly Congregation Enews and the zoom sessions.
- MGP themes were also copied onto our webpage
- Rich resources – a fountain that continues to flow and nourish
- Resources and posters provided rich variety of prayer, art, poetry, reflections, etc. for the use of all in two languages- provided at intervals over the 16 months of MGP as planned and advertised. Gave sisters and associates options of how to use the resources. Resources are still available and are ever relevant
- Wonderful archival materials
- Very well-presented and organized
- The intention is to continue to use the material gathered and presented into the future meetings in preparation for the Chapter throughout 2022
- It is our intention to continue with MGP meetings in September 2021. The resources are available and waiting to be studied
- Our group has agreed to meet again in September 2021 to reflect on our way forward
- It would be good to have the whole Mercy World meet but recognize time zones are a big factor
- We encourage continued occasional global gatherings on regular basis
- Featured on congregation website news
- Enjoyed accompanying resources offered on the MIA site
- Enjoyed and shared posters with others
- Used many of the online resources for prayer or input when with other groups
- Found it valuable having such a wide range of resources – artistic, ministry, prayer.... There was something for everyone. I have referred many people in wider circles to this website
- I used the text and recorded resources provided over the 16 months
- I participated in online prayer and reflection opportunities provided by others – during lockdown for the most part
- Segment 1,2,3 – I circulated the resources to ministries I was leading; used the reflection materials at meetings
- For personal reflection, I used segments 1- 4 the written and recorded materials
- I endeavoured to keep the focus to the fore - *finding new language, theology, images, spirituality and ministries*
- This focus influenced reading and listening of resources beyond MGP, e.g. recent article by Sandra Schneiders, video of Joan Chittister

- The resources provided on the website were engaging, attractive and used a variety of media and print resources.
 - The Facilitator's Guides invited creative ways of presenting the material and invited an appeal to different styles of response. Both religious sisters and companions in mercy could relate to the themes and material provided. Participants of all levels of background could learn together, respond, and grow in application of material to different situations
 - All appreciated the inclusion of accounts of Mercy grassroots ministry with the insights into the ministry presence of sisters and partners throughout the Mercy world
 - The summary posters for each theme were a welcome support to regain focus when there seemed such a wealth of material to select from for a group meeting. These made helpful take-home sheets to keep the theme alive
 - Thank you to Elizabeth Davis for the introductory material for each theme with the reminder of the link throughout and the inclusion of the scriptural and theological insights
 - Reflective prayer resources with online references for music, the inclusion of MGA reflections and creative aspects including poetry and art all enriched the resources provided to us
 - Mary Sullivan's article in the theme 'Mercying' was a special gift.
 - The Good Reading section was also an inspiration and reminder of the breadth of material available
 - Thanks to all who provided the resources from which the Guiding Group made their selection for the website resources presented in such an attractive way
 - I hope these resources can stay available for some time
 - The excellent resources and their wide range of topics meant that for each topic all resources were not able to be used. Can ways be explored to continue to make these available and may be used again in continuing programmes?
- Engagement of the College and Staff:
 - All staff with responsibility for mission received a copy of each poster to display in their area
 - Heads of Departments were contacted when specific material from the MGP presentations informed the curriculum content and staff were encouraged to engage with the material
 - Prayer reflections were used during staff and executive meetings
 - Goal 1 of the College Strategic Plan includes a commitment to engage with the Mercy Global Presence process in an ongoing way
 - Resources were shared with teachers in local schools for use in Religious Education Classes or Transition Year Projects
 - The MGP website address was shared with many people—the principals of our schools/or the teacher responsible for ecology in the school as well as with friends, associates, interfaith groups, etc.

Regional Gatherings

Regional Gatherings—General

- Coordinators and the Guiding Team held more than 40 Zoom meetings for planning, preparing, and evaluating the MGP programs.

Regional Gatherings—ISMAPNG

- Numbers of people who attended in the 18 Regional Gatherings from the Asia Pacific Region were 442 – the average number attending each of these Regional Gatherings was 25 people.
- 1097 people participated in the Institute and Regional Gatherings (from Asia Pacific Region).
- There were approximately 1645 participant hours from our Institute and our Region in the MGP Program (local, regional and international gatherings).

Regional Gatherings—Brisbane

- Our Sisters loved the regional gatherings. Twenty-three joined in the regional gatherings on each occasion. Some chose other regions as well.

Regional Gatherings—Ireland

- On average 25 joined in all of the regional gatherings.

Regional Gatherings—NL and Peru

- Our Congregation was involved (via Zoom) in summary poster global conversations for our region; at least four of us participated in other regional meetings. Up to twenty of our Sisters joined the meetings from the Community room at the Residence at Littledale.
- An average of 50 Sisters and Associates participated in each meeting – most came prepared to participate and did participate.
- Use of small groups good but a little too short.
- Availability of translation important.
- The regional gatherings very much enjoyed; wonderful to make global connections in Mercy in real time.
- The times zones worked well for us (both in Canada and in Peru).

Regional gatherings—Americas

- Sisters and associates joined regional gatherings organized for our region hosted by Newfoundland and the Americas as well as enjoyed visiting Mercys around the world by participating in other regional gatherings.
- Interpretation was appreciated, to bring in voices from Central and South America
- After one experience of breaking into small groups, participants expressed their preference to remain in a large group to hear the diversity of voices.
- Participants were grateful for the depth of sharing around the Advent cosmic wreath and the images and quotes provided in the summary posters.
- When we gathered as just the Americas, we heard the question “Where are the sisters from Newfoundland?” We realized that meant that our community was indeed expanding beyond geographic and canonical boundaries.

Regional Gatherings—Aotearoa New Zealand

- A number of sisters attended the online regional gatherings. Attendance was often across the different regions as some people were not free during the afternoon time slot.
- It was good to have the views of other Mercies internationally. We are all in this together as mercy women.
- Sometimes it could be difficult to come into a large meeting. The breaking into smaller groups was very effective for sharing.
- Good to see people from the past.
- It was good to get the broader perspectives in sharing Mercy.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

During the early months of the implementation of the Mercy Global Presence process, the COVID-19 global pandemic became part of the lived reality of every person on Earth. Recognizing the impact of this pandemic, the Guiding Team wrote a brief essay reflecting on the interplay between this global pandemic and the global contemplation of Mercy Global Presence. The text of that essay is recorded below.

Mercy Global Presence: Gift in This Troubling Time of COVID-19

For the first time in human history, every woman, every man and every child on Earth is vulnerable. Persons worry about safety in their own homes while homeless persons have no place to stay. Older persons with COVID-19 worry that they will be denied priority while infected younger persons worry that resources will run out. Wealthy investors see the steep drop in the stock market while administrators seek to find just ways to treat employees as programs and offices close. Health care workers serve without proper protection, and government officials struggle to develop nation-wide responses. Persons with serious illnesses fear that COVID-19 patients will take all the attention and resources. Public health officials give their best advice without clear evidence, and ordinary persons try to protect each other. Congregational leaders seek the best way forward, and individual Sisters cope as best they can to follow these difficult ways. Not one person on this planet is able to live the way of life that had become comfortable for them. In the midst of this global vulnerability, does our Mercy Global Presence bring any hope or any wisdom?

At the heart of our exploration today is COVID-19, a disease spreading across Earth with very few countries now free of the virus and with the potential to infect up to 60% of the population. This disease has no known vaccine and no known cure. It spreads rapidly. Older persons, persons with other medical conditions and persons with compromised immune systems are especially vulnerable. Closed borders, national emergencies, isolation protocols and quarantines are among the large system attempts to control the spread of this pandemic. Handwashing, disinfecting high-touch surfaces, social distancing and avoidance of travel are among personal attempts to prevent the infection.

Goodness abounds in the response to the pandemic. Government leaders, public health officials, health care workers, first responders, grocery store clerks, pharmacy workers, garbage collectors, janitors, researchers, teachers, ministers, computer specialists, electricians, postal workers, bus drivers, police officers, delivery persons, investment managers and bank officials are among those who continue to provide services for persons confined to their own homes or health facilities. Goodness is visible in those who care for the children of essential workers when their schools are closed. It is visible when people take seriously the advice to keep others safe even when it causes them to make sacrifices about their own comforts.

In her touching **poem of praise** given to all whose goodness is making this journey easier, Christine Valters Paintner includes others beyond the human who give us strength to go on, “Praise be our four-footed companions, with no forethought or anxiety, responding only in love; Praise for the seas and rivers, forests and stones who teach us to endure. Blessed is the water that flows over our hands and the soap that helps keep them clean, each time a baptism. Praise be the birds who continue to sing the sky awake each day, praise for the primrose poking yellow petals from dark earth, blessed is the air clearing overhead so one day we can breathe deeply again.”

Praise be the birds who continue to sing the sky awake each day...

Mercy words such as the Sanskrit *dayaa* (“suffering in the suffering of all beings”) and the Hebrew *rahamim* (“compassionate womb love”) are visibly present in the response of so many struggling to end this nightmare. Circles of mercy are being created in their efforts to be more effective in preventing and healing the infections.

These circles are bringing together the most unlikely partners, all focused on the same goal of prevention, protection, healing and ending the virus. The awareness has finally come that all social systems need to be working in harmony if we are to reach this goal. From the small circles within our congregational houses to the large circles at the World Health Organization, the circles of mercy keep growing and widening—all convinced that together we can do more and do it more wisely than we can alone.

Abounding goodness and increasing circles of mercy are leading us to the strong conviction that the global pandemic can only be countered by a response which is grounded in global contemplation. We have been blessed as a community of Mercy to have engaged in global contemplation for several years through the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) and now the Mercy Global Presence (MGP) process. In more than forty countries, women, men and children have participated in small groups and larger groups to explore our varied responses to the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor. Among the fruits of our global contemplation are wisdom, energy, new directions, new language, courage and new hope. Now, when we can no longer gather in small or large groups, we know that we must and we will find creative ways to continue our global contemplation in a time when it is needed more than ever.

In her poignant [poem *Pandemic*](#), Lynn Ungar says it so well, “What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath—the most sacred of times? . . . Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.”

One of the deepening learnings from MIRP was that we—the entire universe, every dimension of time and space (spiritual and material), galaxies, stars, planets, black holes, ecosystems, animals, plants, humans, molecules and time—are all part of the sacred communion of all creation. Thomas Berry told us, “The entire universe is bonded together in such a way that the presence of each individual is felt throughout the entire spatial and temporal range of the universe.” If the presence of each one is so important, this means that every good deed we do becomes a source of strength, energy and healing for the whole cosmos! Our prayer, our personal and communal contemplation, our suffering, our ministry in response to the cry of Earth and people, our advocacy for social and ecological justice, our creativity and our love are among the gifts we humans bring into the sacred community.

Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Richard Hendrick speaks to the last of these gifts in his [poem about the pandemic](#) which he entitles Lockdown, “Yes there is even death. But there can always be a rebirth of love. Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now. Today, breathe. Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic. The birds are singing again. The sky is clearing, Spring is coming, And we are always encompassed by Love.”

Flowing from the first four months of the Mercy Global Presence process at the end of 2019 is a new understanding of “deep incarnation.” The theologian, Elizabeth Johnson, explains, “Deep incarnation is the radical divine reach in Christ through human flesh all the way down into the living web of organic life.” The biblical scholar, Norman Habel, adds, “God becomes flesh, the Creator becomes clay, the Word becomes Earth. In Jesus, God joins the web of life, becomes part of Earth’s biology.” He goes on to say, “God not only creates, God also suffers. The God whose presence fills Earth and who suffers with creation is also the God who through Christ is restoring creation and reconciling the alienated ones in creation.” Our hope comes in knowing that God suffers with us through this pandemic and will lead us into restoration and reconciliation. Today, the words from Paul’s letter to the Romans (8:22-24) have an entirely new meaning, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For, in hope, we were saved.”

FRUITS OF THE MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE PROCESS

The Voices of the Participants

Collated without Changing any of the Original Wording

Throughout the sixteen-month process, the participants expressed their learnings in numerous ways:

- The comments posted on the presentations online (*disqus*)
- The feedback from the last regional gatherings on the question about what is emerging from the regional conversations
- Feedback received/gathered from other communications—gatherings and emails received throughout the process
- Feedback from congregational and institute coordinators based on input received from local groups sharing reflections on the theme presentations

Four themes emerged from a detailed review of these materials:

1. A new thing is happening – can you not see it? It is transformation ~ a threshold moment ~ ecological conversion ~ a changing consciousness ~ a new normal ~ hope ~ midwives of incarnation happening.
2. New theologies are emerging among us, daring us to imagine God and God's relationship with the cosmos, with Earth, with Earth beings, and with humankind in new ways.
3. We are responding to the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor as one – this we now call integral ecology.
4. Our response in the face of this newness has many names, all echoing the same spirit—right relationships, connection, integration, contemplative presence, inclusion, globalization of Mercy, listening, radical hospitality, deep mutuality. Who are we if not kin?

A new thing is happening – can you not see it? It is transformation ~ a threshold moment ~ ecological conversion ~ a changing consciousness ~ a new normal ~ hope ~ midwives of incarnation happening.

- How can we as Sisters be a beacon of truth?
- Our openness to new theological thinking gives us hope.
- This process keeps calling us to go deeper into the process of transformation. May we open to this conversion, to the realization that it is all one.
- Hope can emerge from adversity.
- Thank you for having the free spirit to be midwife of incarnation happening.
- May we indeed heed the call to leave aside all that is unnecessary and build a new future.
- The possibility for transformation and a new way of seeing surely rests here.
- This is a wonderful reminder that transformation is always taking place.
- My way of trying to announce hope is to seek to bring the new dream, new images, new spiritualities to the foreground of life rather than leave them in the background.

- Young people give me hope in a new and life-giving way—we need to be in solidarity with them in a very visible way.
- I hear the conversion that is happening in us. It is the conversion happening because of letting in and pausing to really see and experience the poor, the person that is there on the edge. That is changing us.
- A transformation took me out of my tiny world with all its concerns and into a vast creation of love, awe, and wonder.
- I can identify very well now with what was referred to so often, as a ‘shift in consciousness’, ‘new Images of God’, ‘theology’, ‘church’, ‘the universe’, and ‘interconnectedness’. This was not dramatic, in any way, but now and again a slow realisation came, that my understanding of life and the world were changing very much and continue to change.

Impact of the pandemic

- Our experience of Mercy Global Presence through the shock waves of the Pandemic widened our field of compassion.
- This process will empower us in the “new normal” to take a practical stance in alleviating the plight of the world’s most poverty stricken and deprived, to be a veritable pandemic of mercy to them.
- Let our Global Presence be a Pandemic of Mercy.
- During this time of the pandemic, there are many vulnerable people needing to gather around a Table of Mercy.
- We are truly in a time of brokenness now and it is only through sharing at the table of this Covid=19 virus and the lessons it is teaching us that we can become whole again in and through the HESED of the Lord God.
- During this quarantine time, I celebrate that we have prayer together, share life and faith together, as well as celebrate our lunches together. We also open and broaden our vision, develop creativity to be able to extend our cup of tea.
- What COVID has allowed for us is to be intentional – getting emotionally connected at a deeper level ... not only in support of those in need – our world, society’s fragility – but with/for one another as Mercy Community.
- The pandemic has allowed us all to have a common sense of vulnerability and a common sense of our humanity. It is a threshold moment.
- This pandemic has shown us how deeply we are all connected, how much we need one another, how we really need to see and feel with one another. It has shown us that we really need to be in right relationship with one another because the diseases that are affecting us are coming from an abuse of nature.
- This lockdown time has drawn so many of us to notice sacred presence in the precious near things.

New theologies are emerging among us, daring us to imagine God and God’s relationship with the cosmos, with Earth, with Earth beings, and with humankind in new ways.

Creation theology—cosmology—deep incarnation

- Teilhard de Chardin called us to a new way of understanding the evolving universe, the evolving planet, and evolving humanity.
- We are challenged to imagine our role as co- creators with our Creator God, having responsibility for caring for Earth and all created beings for whom Earth is our common home. In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis echoes this sense of ongoing creation.
- How stunning and calming is the energy and centeredness of CREATION.

- This process opened my heart to our Creator God in a new way.
- “The very galaxy holding its breath” calls me to trust in this great reverence and know that all will be well.
- We need to choose inclusive language in our readings of Scripture. We need to work at praying together in a way that shines light on the new cosmology.
- It is very easy to go back to the old language, but, if we really want to express the new theology and what is happening around us, then we need to be immersed in that language in our liturgy and our prayers.
- The most exciting thing we have done is to open ourselves up to the sense of new language and new theology – the saddest thing for me is that it does not happen in our churches and liturgy.
- The experience of the living cosmic Advent wreath was an experience globally of new language, new image, new theology.
- We need a redemptive language, a language of hope., We are a redeemed people...because of God's compassion. If we could speak to that, we would lessen the dis-ease and discontent among people and bring people to peace within themselves and the world.
- New science, new biology, new physics are offering a new language and a new way of seeing.
- To hear the heartbeat of God in every person that you meet and to know that everything connects with nature is new theology.
- We often think we are the prophets – I wonder if we ever think of Earth being the prophet?

Theology of enough

- Only those who have just enough throw anything away.
- The new normal will be about “having enough”, not needing extra, healing Earth, and responding with compassion to critical issues of injustice.

We are responding to the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor as one – this we now call integral ecology.

Response to cry of Earth – care for our common home – wounded Earth

- Let us continue building a better relationship with our ‘Common Home’ with a felt sense of relationship!
- The parkland where I walk is the home of the birds, plants, and trees. It is the home of all the people who use it for their waking, cycling, or jogging. We are all welcome into this lovely place that we each share with all of creation there.
- The pandemic has brought home to me how interconnected we all are – that all creation is one. I hope that the new ‘normal’ will give us a greater appreciation of planet Earth and a greater realisation of how dependent on her we are.
- We need to learn how we can live more sustainably and more equitably in our common home. We need to incorporate this into our spirituality and liturgical prayer.
- Because of our active and contemplative charism each sister, regardless of age or circumstance, can make a response to the degradation of Earth by prayer or action.
- If we listen to the sacred song within us and within nature, we will move towards healing Earth.
- Let us include a ritual of mourning in the Mercy Day liturgy and in our November booklet of the dead for all the species.

- Let my heart re-member the wonder of limestone that carpeted my world near Lough Mask in my home country of County Mayo, the shape of which is testimony to creative relationship between rock and water.
- I reflect on where I walked the vast lawn behind our cottage and played in the creek. I reflected on the diversity of beaches I have been privileged to walk: from the rocky beaches of Maine to the sandy beaches of Cape May, New Jersey, and Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and to the cliffs of the Bay of Naples and the Amalfi Coast in Italy.
- I love the way you image Earth as the wounded one, being taken care of by the Samaritan.
- Thank you for your reflection on our need, more and more now, to be aware of our dishonouring of Earth and its wondrous Creation, including ourselves.
- The beautiful photographs are touching glimpses of the world that is accessible to the slow, contemplative gaze. I realise that Earth is always available to me but that my pre-COVID self has deprived myself because of a busyness that pretends importance.
- You have such a personal engagement with this sequoia.
- Over the past two years there has been a greater inclusion of the natural world and a greater understanding of us being a part of that natural world. I do not think that was there before in a lot of interactions in Mercy life.
- The Mercy Global Mercy Process has given me a greater sense of all as my walk is usually what I call a 'Contemplative Walk' – a sense of how I approach trying to develop a 'contemplative stance' towards creation.

Response to cry of poor, refugees – creating circles of compassion

- I am changing, I am beginning to really see all those I meet during the day (along my walk or in the church). I greet them with a friendly salute and a recognition that each person is carrying their own values, suffering or joys. I am very aware of racism as I walk along and meet people from other homelands.
- It is imperative for us to widen our circle of compassion, embracing all living creatures, but especially our fellow human beings, regardless of creed, colour, or race.
- This process centres human life in the expansive global heart of love and responsibility for the other in contrast to the small hearts of hate, selfishness, and destruction.
- The people draw Mercy from us and return it a hundredfold.
- I felt supported in my ministry, assured that need is our cloister – resting on and backed up by prayer and contemplation.

Invitation to co-create with the Creator God

- God's steadfast compassionate love ensures the growth of each being and continues the work of Creation. God asks us to work concretely in welcoming refugees and in spending real concrete time with the poor.
- It is high time that we as young mercy ecology prove to our country that we have a role to play in our country.
- There is a movement beginning, a planetary movement, throughout the world. It is a movement of the heart and spirit towards this greater level of respectful behaviour for Earth and humanity.
- This process shows a terrific integration of Earth, of contemplation, of Earth as animals and plants, but also of the people who are poor.
- It was not just seeing the face of the poor but being changed by the face of the poor – I think the same is happening with the destruction of the Earth.

Our response in the face of this newness has many names, all echoing the same spirit – right relationships, connection, integration, contemplative presence, inclusion, globalization of Mercy, listening, being listened to, radical hospitality, deep mutuality. Who are we if not kin?

- The spiritual traditions of our world share so much common ground. God is love after all and we are all linked in that divine creative energy. Let us work together in friendship and respect by embracing diversity as a path to harmony.
- We do not need to have reached the state of perfection to be contemplatives. We are so busy maintaining an institution; this business so often stops any human being from being able to be contemplative some of the time.
- Active presence underscores both contemplative seeing and compassionate heart. We are present to the other and Earth, taking time to see, to look, to respond, to go deeper to reach out to the beauty within.
- There is nothing to do but to fall deeper and deeper into stillness and act from that stillness – more silence, more inclusion of Earth in a real way, not just a word way but with a broader vision.
- Observing the kindness, observing the compassion which many people have shown – they are probably the same ones eating bread with us, having their cup of tea every day.
- Thank you for giving us another way for all God's children to connect with one another.
- Who are we if not kin? As Black Lives Matter develops, as I consider different ethnic groups, and as I look at the fundamental interconnectedness between all life forms, this line keeps resonating in my soul.
- Divisions and differences are so often to the fore.... If only we shared the essence more often!
- Relationship is central, and with this insight, there is hope indeed that we can learn to live a new language for this time.
- The challenge can be when I cannot see the heartbeat of God in the person whose beliefs and practices are so different from mine, from what I believe, what I hold dear, what I think is so important.
- None of us have any control over these ripples, or knowledge of where they go, but we have certainty that all small changes and shifts bring about more changes and shifts and so the story continues.
- The call to 'contemplative seeing' was very strong and needs to be lived and experienced. I think that great things will continue to evolve as globally we OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE.

Inclusion of Indigenous Wisdoms

- The wisdom of America Latina and of Aotearoa have embraced!
- We need reminders such as yours to experience the wisdom of our First Nation peoples and that of the Desert Elders, all of whom knew intuitively that life itself is sacred.
- When, oh when, will we as human beings develop our intuition enough to recognise the value in the wisdom of indigenous nations.

Fragility ~ Vulnerability ~ "Cracks where the light gets in"

- It is up to us to get those bells ringing through our actions...make the offering even though its imperfect...Rumi was saying the crack is where the light gets into the earth.
- We have all been wounded in this COVID time, in different ways. We must allow our wounds to let the light in to the world.

Connection in global Mercy community

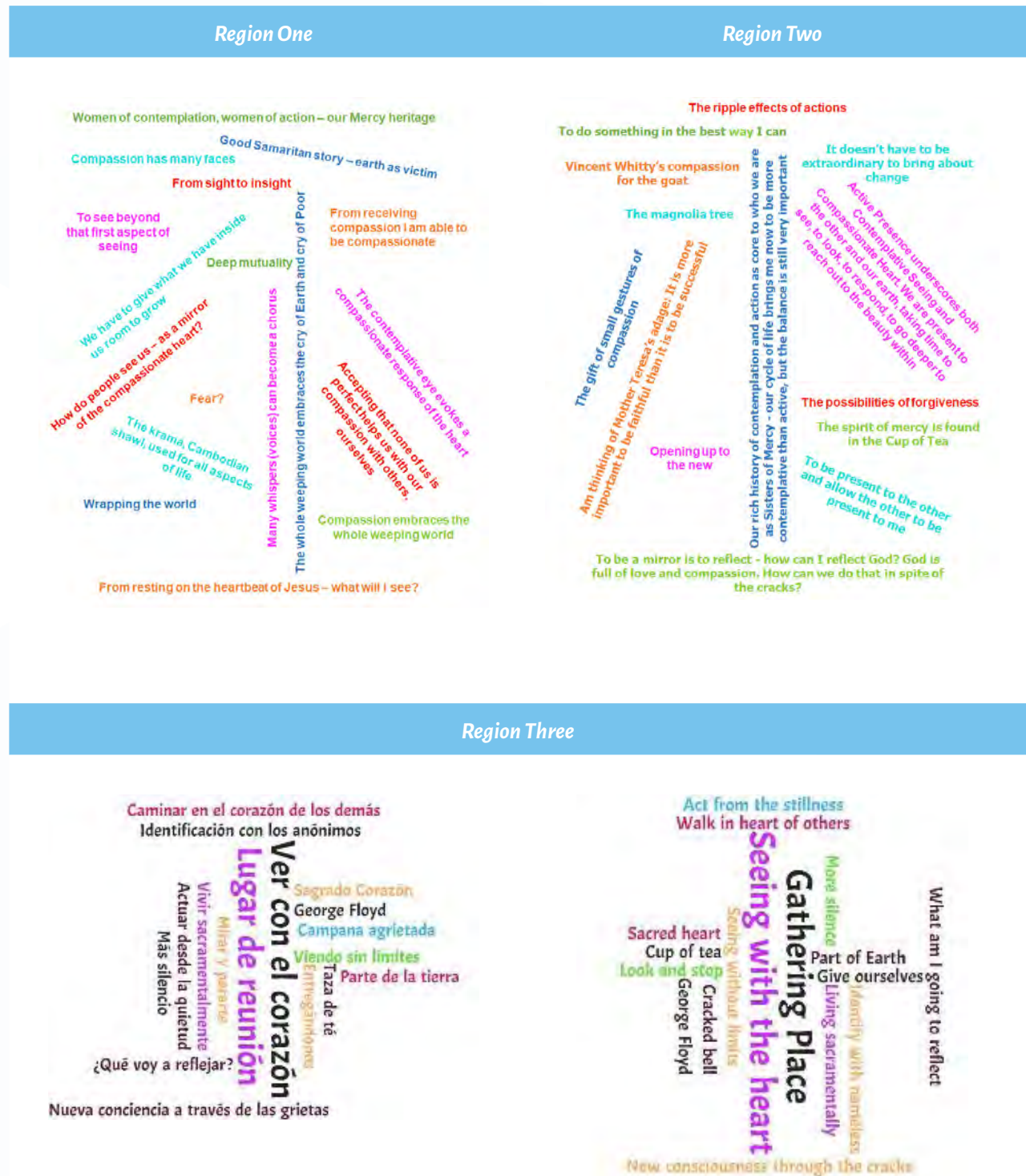
- Is there something, somebody, some truth, that we need to look at and ask ourselves what, as a group, we need to do to proclaim a truth that there is life out there that we can rescue if we all do something as one?
- It is so wonderful to meet sisters from all over the world and to feel “at home” as a Mercy Sister.
- [It has] brought those of us far away (geographically and in other ways) to be able to be connected on a small screen, sharing our hopes, dreams, and ideas.
- The MGP process is the first time that being globally present to one another as Mercy men and women around the world has really been able to happen. My hope is that we can continue to find ways for this to happen because it allows for new learnings and new creations of Mercy to emerge. It allows for a continuation of connection that can only make the heartbeat of Mercy grow stronger and that Mercy presence in the world grow stronger.
- My hope is that we continue to find new ways to extend Mercy global presence and that connectedness with one another. We are all so enriched by it and by the presence of each other, and we can extend that to all parts of the world.
- I am so happy to see the Sisters of Mercy from across all the world. I am so amazed to be connected with the Sisters on the other side of the world!
- I am grateful for our rich history of contemplation and action as core to who we are as Sisters of Mercy. Our cycle of life brings me now to be more contemplative than active, but the balance is still very important.
- I see something more fundamental than languages, images and theologies emerging here. There is a new relationship among us as a global Mercy community. We have a lot to learn from each other and maybe in the learning lies the language, the images and the theologies. This is a blessing. I cannot get enough of it.
- I am grateful for MIA which makes me realize that we are an international community
- The new language for us is being part of Mercy global in terms of sharing, in terms of connection.
- I found a unified mercy voice, a togetherness – something greater than ourselves.
- Mercy Global Presence opened my eyes to a lot of ministries in the Congregation.
- As I look back on my experience of MGP, I am very aware that it was a slow evolving process that gradually became a central part of my reflective life.

Words of Gratitude for presentations, posters, regional gatherings, and congregational/institute coordinators

- A beautiful adventure! I took a slow walk along the magnificent and prayerful meditation of images.
- Your reflection invites me, us, to look into the deep indeed step into the deep; to be courageous enough to look outward, upward and accept the invitation to expand my, our consciousness, our thinking our way of being.
- I found the whole process so helpful and inspiring.... I am becoming more contemplative in my seeing!
- The posters are wonderful and for keeping for future reflections... a source of inspiration and desire to change
- Mercy Global Presence is true gift. I have been personally affected by harvesting the creativity of so many to offer so many resources, challenges, and contemplative opportunities; by the way that the global nature of it has made all the countries seem closer; by the leadership of the Guiding Group and the creativity that flows; by the recognition that not ‘one size fits all’; by the extra resources that are educating and enlightening.
- Thank you all for such inspiring, enriching, and hopeful virtual gatherings.

- My hope is that we do not lose this momentum. We may be at the crossroads, but there are the little things we can continue to do to make a difference.
- Thank you all for the wonderful sharing which gives us hope to continue being gallant advocates in responding to the cry of the earth and the poor amid the tough times of COVID.
- A new awareness of GLOBAL MERCY IN ACTION is being created.
- I feel very encouraged. We encourage each other.
- Thank you for making the way together.
- When I reflected on the poster, it immediately brought to mind the richness of the many resources made available to us over the past few years. *Mercy eNews* has been the conduit for us as Sisters of Mercy and Partners in Mercy. The reflections have exposed us to so much through art, poetry, music, and writing. How blessed we are to have been given so many rich and valuable resources! Thank you to the dreamers behind Mercy Global Presence and all who brought it to this wonderful, shared experience.
- Thank you all for sharing your gifts of organization, prayerfulness, writing skills so that we are one internationally in MGP. I love that breadth of vision.
- Thanks for the reflections and zoom gatherings that have brought us the Mercy family to feel at home during this pandemic time.
- It was a privilege to join so many sisters to create the Advent Cosmic Wreath. Thank you for your inspirational work and leadership.
- How lovely it was to join globally in MERCY and to see familiar faces from past meetings. The reflections will help us to retain the joy and hope experienced.
- It is a gift to share around the world. Internet has played a part in helping us shape the future.
- Thank you also to MIA for sharing the summary video of Elizabeth Davis reminding us of the process from the Mercy Researchers Conference to the Mercy International Reflection Process to the MIA statement and into Mercy Global Presence.
- It is a gift to be part of the journey into 'new language, new images, new theology, new spirituality and new ministry' as we articulate these understandings and share our experience of this unfolding in these times.
- I extend gratitude to all involved in the Mercy World who had the vision and energy to initiate MGP to follow from the Mercy International Theological Reflection Process and all the organization to allow it infolding as it is/did to connect the Mercy World in God's mission of mercy.
- The resources presented are excellent, accessible, and inspiring – prayer, reflection and action.

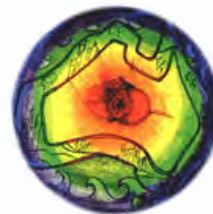
Word Clouds from Final Three Regional Gatherings were created by Claudia Ward rsm from the feedback shared in the large group after the small group discussion on the question: 'When I look at the words, images, or phrases which touched me about the two posters, how do I see the connection between Contemplative Seeing and Compassionate Heart?'



REFLECTIONS FROM INSTITUTES AND CONGREGATIONS

Copied as presented by Coordinators

Comments from Sisters of Mercy (Brisbane Congregation)



- The readings, prayers, art and voices from ministry plus the Good Reading resources enabled me to have an experience like the disciples on the road to Emmaus “our hearts were burning within us”.
- Posters were beautiful and summarised the content of each theme so well .
- So helpful to be able to go back to the posters for reflection and prayer.
- The process of fortnightly Zoom sessions (locally) on the themes stimulated my interest in reading and reflecting that I may not have done on my own.
- Using zoom this way enabled me to use it in other situations.
- The richness of varied resources on a theme was empowering.
- Grateful for such richness of resources and connections.
- It was an extraordinary way of sharing our spirituality and listening to others.
- I was inspired to write this after my reflection and sharing: *“We, as Sisters of Mercy, are emboldened to live lives anew in Mercy and justice to heal a hurting world. As women of love and compassion and with a knowledge of the Church as Mission, we reveal more strongly signs of God’s presence and closeness in the world.”*
- New theologies are emerging among us,
 - The Cosmic Christ was brought to my awareness and prayer.
 - Integral Ecology.
 - New language – *Metissage* – a braiding of differences and new patterns, a gathering of the threads of our lived experience resplendent in all the colours and textures of Earth to create a new weaving of mercy.
 - Deep Incarnation.
 - A new and fuller appreciation of Advent.
 - Mercying – understanding that Mercy is in our DNA.
 - The heartbeat of God in all humans and nonhumans.
 - All of life is sacred – all is kin.
 - Artwork of *Table - all are kin* was inspiring and gave me much enriched reflection.
- Globalization of Mercy - who are we if not kin?
 - Regional Gatherings enabled me to feel I belong to an international group.
 - I felt part of MIA for the first time.
 - I had a deeper experience of Mercy as presence and not just doing.

- I was energised by seeing and hearing from young women across the globe who are alive and full of Mercy.
 - Rich resources and sharing internationally and locally especially during pandemic lockdown was gift that enriched my spirituality.
 - The prophetic words of our former Congregation Leader Kath Burke rang true: *“Worldwide, there is still enormous creativity and energy. We must utilize both the talent and the technology available among us to ensure the proper telling of our story in all its richness. We are being challenged to link with one another right across the world so that the Broken Heart of Mercy can enter more deeply into us and embrace God's beloved poor.”*
 - Having the chance to connect locally and globally during lockdown was wonderful, a real gift.
 - The gift of presence to and with others was tangible.
 - Sharing in our local and international groups enabled us to hear common issues and hear the voices of those in our world who are suffering.
 - We are part of one world – International Zoom sessions let us be a *world without borders*.
 - MGP gave us way to be in solidarity with those in isolation during the pandemic as well as being connected through our Mercy spirit.
 - We cannot stop now – this is just the beginning of our adventure together.
 - The purpose of MIA to link us across the world - MGP has enabled us to do this creatively and prayerfully.
- MIRP led to MGP.. where to now?
 - After reflection on the theme of Mercy, I stood in the shoes of each statement, in Matthew 25 and told today's story of Mercy...
 - *I am a homeless woman on Baggot St.* This morning on your way to work, you took the time to stop and give me a sandwich and coffee for breakfast.
 - *I was born in Syria, and I am 10 years old.* Because of the war, my family and I had to leave our home and country and come to a new land. You welcomed us to Ireland and gave us a home, and a community. Now I can go to school again, I have new friends, and my family and starting to be happy again.
 - *I was still a teenager when I was trafficked to Ireland by people who should have protected me.* Your centre for women provided me with a safe haven. Each week you listened to me, you touched me lovingly, you guided me. You gave me hope when my hope was gone. Especially you gave me wings to fly. Now I am an Irish citizen following my dreams.
 - *I am a teenager from North Africa.* I am hungry, tired, sick, exhausted after a long, unsafe boat trip to France in search of my family. You helped me to get to England and reunite with my loved ones.
 - *I am an anti-war Activist.* I was in prison for entering, with others, the Hanger at Shannon airport, and causing damage to planes that carry U.S soldiers to Iraq for purposes of war. You visited me in prison and came to my trial where I was acquitted.
 - *I am Mother Earth,* and I am on a ventilator. I can't breathe because my lungs are so clogged from the air and other pollution that is visited upon me each day. You help me every time you think/act clean and green, you re-use, and recycle, you honour me as your home and mother.

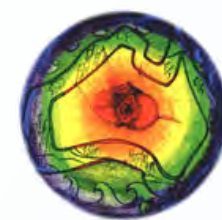
Comments from Sisters of Mercy (Philippines Congregation)

- It was very enriching; it deepened our Mercy Spirituality and enhanced our mercy global connectedness.
- The MGP process has been encouraging and challenging as well for it made me reflect on suggested topics as experienced in my faith life with my companions in the journey at prayer, in community and at work.
- The MGP process “kind of” urged me to go deep into prayerful reflection of our experience of God's presence in ourselves, our situation wherever we are and whoever we are with as Sisters of Mercy in the world today.
- Through Catherine McAuley's spirit of mercy and compassion for the least of our brethren, we truly become instruments of God's face and works of mercy in this time and age.
- It gives me a profound sense of “religious wholeness” by way of knowing, understanding myself deeply and helping me transcend inwardly so that mercy, compassion, and forgiveness have beautiful faces and life to me now.
- The process helped me broaden my perspective on the life and mission of Mercy especially to the poor and the underprivileged. My faith in God and my appreciation for the gift of religious life have been truly deepened as I continue to give my heart to those who are in need.
- Let us continue doing this MGP process for it helps us deepen our Mercy vocation and we feel that we become more relevant in doing our works of mercy.
- This MGP reflection process and regional gathering did not only give me a deeper understanding about the theological perspective of my Mercy Works, but it also inspired me to keep in touch through my prayer and reflection to the members of mercy world.
- Through this process, we feel we are not “isolated”. When we were invited to participate in the Mercy Asia Pacific gathering in Australia, and when Adele Howard was sent by ISMAPNG group to assist and support us here in PH in the MIRP process, we were deeply touched with this gesture of “accompanying” us in this journey. We are so grateful that our presence as Mercy Philippines was really counted and honoured.



Comments from Sisters of Mercy (Parramatta Congregation)

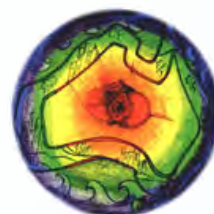
- Thank you for this informative, reflective program.
- The strength of the program I felt was in the different ways each theme was explored.
- Artistic representations were challenging and engaging.
- The posters were brilliant. A great way of summing up the theme.
- The highlight for me was the zoom meetings and the way they allowed for individual presentation & break out breakout room discussions.
- It was engaging to be with other members of the Mercy Family from around the globe.
- The use of the material in our Congregation was appreciated.
- The zoom meeting that was held in our Congregation and the wider global group brought a wider and deeper dimension to the themes.
- MGP has strengthened my/our spiritual journey – bringing new ideas, enlarging mindset.
- There are many great resources that can be used for personal reflection and group discussion for years to come.



- I am so grateful to the team. I realise how much went into the planning of this programme.
- I found the variety of themes and topics engaging always appealing on some level which I may not have considered before.
- I had little depth of understanding of the term cosmos in the context of faith. I hadn't explored the cosmos and the synergy that could exist between it and my faith, and now am gratefully graced with a more formative depth.
- We are invited by MGP to embrace all life forms and acknowledge their manifestation as a part of Divine presence. This has deepened the notion of *communion of saints*.
- We have been opened to consider more fully the beauty, generosity and creativity of the universe and natural world.
- My understanding of the depth and breadth of the incarnation and trinity had expanded.
- The damage being done to Earth systems especially the oceans and to wildlife was clearly communicated.
- The artistic responses were simple yet profound beautifully and individually presented in various forms e.g., art and photography.
- For the first time I realised our artistic presentations can be a stimulus to prayer and theological thinking.
- I am now practising *Visio Divina* as part of my prayer and reflection.
- Grassroots ministry presentations were down to earth and grounded the Mercy response in real life situations.
- Many mentioned how they were using the reflective prayers with other student and adult groups - a wonderful resource.
- The mix of resources, and their continuing availability online, is invaluable.
- The *Musing for the Journey* really helped steer the discussion.
- *Good Reading* Section was invaluable. It provided numerous rich resources to deepen and broaden each theme. These resources were found to be very useful for personal reflection and sharing in school and parish ministry.
- Input from *Distinct Voices*, *Mercy Global Action* and *Mercy Global Presence* in general, demonstrated the wonderful and diverse contribution of Mercy sisters, associates, and other partner organisations, to furthering Mercy values and ministries world-wide.
- My worldview has been greatly enlarged by following these themes and pondering on the resources.
- The work presented in the various mediums was professional, informative, and creative.
- The way the material was prepared, formatted, and presented electronically for each session deserves the highest praise.
- Introductions to each theme were excellent and provided a link with previous themes. These gave the whole program an evolutionary feel.
- How Anne Walsh put the work together each month was extraordinary.
- Topics covered in the Themes and Resources were relevant to contemporary issues such as climate change, interfaith appreciation, displacement of peoples, care for earth and those suffering from poverty.
- Homelessness and the plight of refugees and other important issues were considered.
- The wide number of presenters enabled us to see things from different perspectives and to realise that there is more than one way to look at an issue and reflect on it theologically.
- Integral ecology as presented by MGP fits in well with *Laudato Si* and other efforts by the Church to address care for our common home and climate change.

- Good Reading Section was wonderful in the resources it offered, especially the YouTubes-always relevant.
- The *Deep Social Change* Theme touched on how people, groups and life situations change over time. It offered some processes that contribute to tipping points and widespread dissemination of new values, ideas, actions and legislative changes. Many found this helpful.
- The theme involving cosmos was appreciated. It set MGP in a deep-time context, a big picture that is often not recognised.
- It became evident that the Holy Spirit moves in all species.
- The interconnection, of cosmos, earth and species, entangled as it were, was evident in many presentations. This is often not recognised. Many found it refreshing to see this so prominent.
- Our human interconnection with the natural and spiritual worlds in deep time was recognised.
- A good balance between contemplation and action in presentations. Helpful for both aspects of mercy Life.
- MGP has opened our eyes to the wonderful and varied ministries of mercy sisters and their partners throughout the world.
- MGP sharpened our realisation of the many different countries and cultures in which Mercy sisters live and work. It heightened our knowledge of those sisters working in countries other than their country of origin.
- The co-ordination of the program was excellent. Co-ordinators and Guiding Team kept the process on track.
- The program reminded us of our continual need for personal and social conversion. It was always challenging.
- Presenters of the various resources expressed gratitude that they had been invited to contribute and felt that they had been enriched by contributing.
- The zoom sessions heightened the capacity of many participants to use technology to communicate with others nationally and internationally. For many this was a valuable learning experience and a useful skill.

Comments from Sisters of Mercy (Institute of Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea)



- The Mercy Global Presence Program has been a wonderful source for reflection, spurring us into action - as we looked at the challenges facing our world through a Mercy Lens. As each theme unfolded, I marvelled at the depth of reflection and the amazing richly layered creativity of so many- imagery expressed through art, poetry, deep reflection. The posters are there to remind me as I return again and again to the richness of this program.
- I found the sessions conducted here in Australia helped whet my appetite to delve deeper into each theme. I particularly appreciated the way Elizabeth Davis, as a wonderful wisdom figure, drew the threads together and invited us to reflect on our global scene.
- During Covid Lockdown when many other avenues for action were “cut off, as it were”, Zoom opened up so many other vistas.
- Mercy Global Presence in its richness, depth and variety both reveals and enhances the communion of hearts and minds that exists among Mercy people as part of the ecclesia across the world.
- I particularly valued segment 1 with its focus on cosmology, the interconnection of all of creation, and the incarnate presence of God. I can only bow before the mystery (cf. Romans 11:33.) It is this which enables me to hope in the midst of the pandemic, the climate crisis and global systemic injustice.
- From the outset of the Mercy Global Presence program, I was captivated by the idea of ecological *métissage*. I looked forward to each phase and I was never disappointed. The gatherings, both local and regional, connected

global Mercy in a renewed commitment to ecological justice that is profoundly theological and grounded in the gospel. Deep gratitude to all who made MGP an extraordinarily rich experience and thank you especially for the wealth of timeless resources that were generated and that are available to the Mercy global family and beyond.

- I appreciated the development of the themes and the fact that the format was constant throughout the program. I found the introduction to each block very helpful and really valued the good reading section. The fact that the program was global helped me tremendously in my understanding of “mercy presence” that is wider than the sphere I’m in.
- The sessions that you offered to members of ISMAPNG were particularly helpful as were the posters at the end of each block. Regarding the Cosmic Advent wreath, maybe that is something that can continue to draw the Mercy World together into the future.
- The bringing together of so many and diverse mercy women to offer this program has been a special opportunity / gift. Thanks to all.
- The theme of “*Contemplative Seeing*” resonated with me. I loved the image of the old, gnarled tree, which despite having lost its youthful tree beauty and its ability to provide shade, still offers refuge to the creatures who shelter in its trunk. Many of us now in our elder years, like the old tree, still have something to give, and I believe that it is important to acknowledge and encourage that. But, as emphasised in this theme, contemplative seeing enables us to go beyond the mere externals to the recognition of the special dignity of the person or of whatever we are engaging with in the natural environment. This kind of seeing is openness to presence, the presence of God, or as Martin Buber names it, ‘I-Thou’.
- I am very grateful to the team who took the initiative to develop the entire process of the Mercy Global Presence Programme. I have yet to plumb the depths of some of the excellent resources but there is enough there to nourish my spirituality for some time to come.
- The MGP programme with its four themes, has been timely, since I believe that in view of our diminishing numbers across the world, and in light of the “signs of the times” our response to the charism of Mercy may need to be reviewed, refined and/or changed radically, because, as Mary Sullivan comments in her thoughtful and challenging article : “*we may have softened its (our Mercy life and mission) meaning, and treated this mercifulness as an already acquired and comfortable response to the world and its people*”.
- I look forward to any future initiatives that may come out of the MGP programme.
- As I look back on what has been a huge ‘warehouse’ of information, inspiration, reflection, prayer resources, and personal challenge, my first response is one of gratitude to the guiding team, and more than 100 Mercy people around the world who contributed to the creation of: Mercy Global Presence.
- The most important thing for me from the Program was the powerful sense of belonging and connection with:
 - creation, (and where our Pope is leading the church with regard to caring for our earth)
 - people world-wide, and the good things happening, (the news on media is always so sad and bad)
 - other Mercies, (the collaboration and unity within the diversity); and
 - our roots in Catherine and her legacy to us. I see that ‘Mercy’ cannot be confined by culture or a particular mode of expression. It is and must be forever expressed in the ‘present’, and within a context of relationships. We (all created beings) are all connected, and therefore share in the responsibility for each other in some way.
- Sharing with people from around the globe at the regional meetings was a valuable and rather unique experience. Reading and hearing what others have to say helps refine my own values, identity, and response to situations. Great amount of planning and organisation must have gone into those regional meetings and gathering of resources. Fantastic.

- Having on-going access to the resources is also very important. At times, I can only take in so much or do so much. Being able to return to the website and access the resources, when I need to, means I can bite off just as much as I can chew at that time. Something that didn't touch me particularly at first encounter can make more sense and be of greater interest at another time. Covid lockdown times allow me to go back to pray with, or re-read articles, or sit with images.
- It may have been easier to study the materials in a group, but that wasn't possible except for zoom meetings.
- I always 'knew' Mercy was all over the world, but 'Global Presence' brought it to the depth of my consciousness. So, before I comment I want to say what a wonderful initiative it was catching up with Mercies all over the world! Thank you to all involved.
- The coloured posters were a great help in preparing us for what was to follow (in the Regional Gatherings) I had time to reflect on them before the session.
- I enjoyed especially the session comparing all the world religions. Somehow that helped me feel more one with them all.
- It was good to meet so many Mercies online, especially those I had met years before. The Cosmic Advent Wreath was an appropriate preparation for Christmas (again please).
- Overall, I am most grateful for the MGP Zooms because they opened the International Mercy scene to me. Mercy women all over the world were bringing and finding the Mercy of God in everyday situations.
- Each session from MGP was packed with inspiration via the talks from Adele and discussion via the CHAT rooms plus so many resources were offered which continue to inspire and challenge my thinking. Sincere thanks to the women who prepared these resources, each session and to Adele, for this fine offering of Mercy in a Global context May each woman have the strength to continue into the future. To have these sessions in my "home" without the need to travel many kilometres and the money involved was most appreciated.
- Strongest thought to me about the process is amazement and gratitude for all that has come from "the grain of wheat" - our humble groups to consider the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We heard the two cries! Blessings on the people with vision and energy who took it on to the great point that it has reached. It has been inspiring and affirming to share with Sisters nationally and occasionally internationally.
- I am amazed at the high level of awareness-raising that seems to have resulted. And I pay tribute to all like you who kept on encouraging and carried us through.
- The sessions that I most connected with were the Displacement of Peoples in Segment 2 and Contemplative Seeing in Segment 4.
 - I really felt for the plight of people who left all for freedom and a new way of life. For a number of years I have worked with refugees who were displaced by wars and oppression. I visited a camp in Kakuma in north-west Kenya with its 12 square kilometre of barren land where displaced people built mud huts for themselves and tried to live a normal sort of life. I have listened to their stories and empathised about the difficulties and insecurities they faced as they fled bad situations and lived in hope that they would be rescued. The recent distressing situation in Kabul brings this back to me with its tangible portrayal of so many people desperate to leave that country, visibly facing great fear, anxiety, and apprehension about their futures.

- With Contemplative Seeing I saw that the Displacement connects me with my own sense of displacement and vulnerability experienced while working in Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Kenya. I experienced cultures not familiar to me, I was an ‘unknown’, without an obvious history and I had to find ways of communicating effectively there. In the broad society in which I live in Australia, I can also often find myself feeling at odds with current modes and mores of behaviours.
- The practice of Contemplative seeing can help me to accept my vulnerabilities of ‘not knowing’, find ways to open my compassionate heart and help me in the Mercying that can honour people and build circles of hope and gladness with those I now move amongst.
- I am very grateful that these Segments have been open to the whole of the Mercy family. This has enabled us to find ‘like-minded’ companions on the journey. I appreciate very much the treasures of our being together and the brilliant and beautiful resources we enjoyed.

Comments from Sisters of Mercy (The Congregation)



- As I look back on my experience of MGP, I am very aware that it was a slow evolving process that gradually became a central part of my reflective life. Before I was asked to work with Suzanne in opening this resource up to others, I was tuning into the MGP resources myself, and negotiating my way gently and consistently through it. Prior to that, I was committed to the MIRP process as I was a cluster coordinator at that time, and consequently put a lot of work into this, in the service of our group meetings. The movement from that to MGP was seamless really and a natural progression. In fact, for some parts of MGP, I revisited sections of MIRP, particularly the VOICES.
- I was at all times marvelling at the variety of resources made available on the microsite. I would spend hours going through the various themes, and during the last few months, spent a lot of time with the “more reading” in every segment. I loved that section. I also listened to many of the YouTube pieces there. There were some amazing talks and interviews that I listened to and reflected on.
- My knowledge and awareness were expanding all the time. I can identify very well now with what was referred to so often, as a ‘shift in consciousness’, ‘new Images of God’, ‘theology’, ‘church’, ‘the universe’, and ‘interconnectedness’. This was not dramatic, in any way, but now and again a slow realisation came, that my understanding of life and the world were changing very much and continue to change.
- My image of God continues to change and evolve. I get so excited at times, and my heart fills with gratitude that at this stage of my life, I am being offered so many opportunities to be nourished, changed and transformed. There was always excitement for me when each new segment became available on the microsite, and then each new theme. In conversation with others, and particularly with people I work with, we had many a lively discussion and opportunities to share exciting insights.
- A whole new dimension was opened up when we formed a reflection group of 10 people. This was a mixed group of very interesting and open-minded people from diverse walks of life, diverse theologies, and diverse ways of viewing the world and church. MGP was brought to life and the levels of sharing were amazing. Our hearts and minds were moved so often.
- I had a real sense, at times, that the ripples from this group were far-reaching. People were changing and sharing this experience so openly and sacredly. I would visualise each of them going home to their many and varied living contexts and bringing about gentle quiet changes there. It is impossible to measure this, - it was a strong sense I had.
- None of us have any control over these ripples, or knowledge of where they go, but we have certainty that all small changes and shifts bring about more changes and shifts and so the story continues.....

- I am very pleased at this stage, that we have now come to the end of this phase of the MGP process. It is now time to pause, reflect, and live life in the present moment, to the full. The call to 'contemplative seeing' was very strong and needs to be lived and experienced. I think that great things will continue to evolve as globally we OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE.....
- Thank you to the guiding team, to Anne Walsh, and to our Congregational Co-ordinator, Sheila Curran for your wonderful guidance, encouragement, inspiration, hard work and so much more. You are serving our global community of life so well. Congratulations!
- Blessings in abundance as each of you move forward on your many and varied journeys.
- As our reflection group met, we often returned to reconsider a theme because of its depth. This invariably led to an even richer discussion than the previous one. As individuals shared what was happening in their own lives, it was clear that MGP is not just a theoretical process but one which invites the participant into real, meaningful relationship with the issues presented. It is an occasion for deepening consciousness in the face of major global issues. The last theme in the series speaks of circles, and there is evidence of many widening circles forming way beyond Mercy.
- Mercy Global Presence took us into the real world and connected local, national, and international threads. The space where theology and ecology inform each other is a critical issue in all education.
- We found the exercise stimulating, relevant, spiritually inspiring and with openings for discussion. Elizabeth's introductions were wonderful and opened the doors to the great varieties of routes we could follow from and with the other contributors. We are deeply grateful to our Sisters from the various continents who took time to not only research but opened their hearts to share their own spirituality and experiences of mercy in their contributions. There was so much to work with, prayerful reflections, artwork, and a glimpse into Mercy Ministries
- Mercy Global Presence has been a journey into the soul of Creation through Art, Spirituality, the insights of Indigenous peoples and of those working at grassroots level. Over the 16 months we have been exposed to Mercy Artists, the thoughts of Mercy Theologians and we have been able to share in reflections of great depth prepared by Mercies, by our colleagues in various ministries, as well as by Mercy Associates.
- This has most definitely been a global experience enhanced by the various zoom meetings that brought us together in a very unique way during the Covid pandemic. We have been drawn into the Trinity, shared an interfaith meal, seen videos of great beauty and also of incredible sadness, highlighting the plight of the earth and the cry of the poor.
- We have walked with Catherine as she called us onto new paths of Mercy in these unprecedented times. The beautiful posters and teaching manuals have ensured that the work of this process can and will be carried on into the future. We have drawn together the threads of our diversity, as daughters of Catherine, and woven them into a new tapestry of Mercy, "weaving the colours of our souls into the heart of this moment," the process facilitated and inspired by Mercy Global Presence.
- I really appreciate that every paragraph in the Reflection from the Guiding Team in September 2020 begins with the phrase 'Hope is rising'.
- Despite these times of chaos, uncertainty, anxieties, growing poverty, climate emergency and increasing disparity, the conversations at gatherings spoke to hope rising among us and around us. In the words of one participant, "My way of trying to announce hope is to seek to bring the new dream, new images, new spiritualities to the foreground rather than the background." Hope is rising.
 - Hope is rising in new ways of ministry in which Mercy is responding—presence of Mercy along border crossings, new presence to the 'other', e.g., displaced persons and restoration of Earth, new ways of living the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy (even adding an eighth work of showing Mercy to the Earth).

- Hope is also rising in the simpler lifestyle to which the times are calling us. This call to simplicity comes as we are socially isolated for safety and protection during the global pandemic. Decluttering is happening and a new source of energy for community and ministry, allowing in the new.
 - Hope is rising in new ways of communicating e.g., Zoom and WhatsApp, which we have welcomed, driven by the realities of our times. We have used these new technologies in wonderfully creative ways—irrespective of our age or familiarity with modern technology.
 - Hope is rising in our new sense of courage and solidarity, emerging amid suffering. Tears of pain in one Zoom global conversation become tears of joy in the next. We are learning anew the joy that young people bring us. Together we listen and learn about care of our common home. Young people help us to see ourselves into the future.
 - Hope is rising in the growing appreciation of diversity and inclusion as we see, hear, and share experiences from our lived experiences of Mercy, lived in many realities. The word listen has new layers of meaning when we realise how rich our tradition is and that of others are. Maureen Murphy's poetic words, "Who are we if not kin" negates the word 'stranger'.
 - Hope is rising in our newfound confidence in our capacity within ourselves and others. As one of us said, 'We may be aging but we are well, alive and mercying'. Congratulations to the aged. This newfound hope demands not only a new mind set but a new heartset!!!
- How do we 'cultivate' the seeds of real hope? I think our foundress Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it—one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk—one person at a time."
 - Congratulations to the Team, Elizabeth, Berneice, and Anne on the above masterpiece enhanced by the four creative Posters. I feel reenergized after looking at this material tonight and look forward to MGP's next edition!!!
 - I participated in an international group and Inter Congregational with non-religious. Being in the group encouraged me to do the reading. I really appreciated Elizabeth Davis's Introduction to all the segments. For me there are lots of articles in the Introductions to go back to MGP which opened my eyes to a lot of ministries in the Congregation. Thank you, Sheila, for all the wonderful work you do for us.
 - I was really challenged to broaden my horizons regarding my personal relationship with Mercy Projects in many places in the world.
 - What was especially interesting and deeply moving was the depth of our Mercy integration into whatever situation we find ourselves in, our recognition of what the people themselves see as their needs, and our willingness to work alongside them as true sisters.
 - I want to thank each of you for this wonderful opportunity of meeting, reflecting with, sharing with so many Mercies all over the world.
 - It has been such a time for personal growth as well as a time for appreciating "Mercy" world-wide.
 - The posters presented so much to reflect on, so much to appreciate and some of the pictures and quotations have imprinted themselves on my mind—and hopefully in my heart.
 - There is still a lot to share at congregational and community level and the posters can be re-used for this.
 - I also appreciated meeting old friends and acquaintances in the break-away rooms. The new acquaintances here broadened my knowledge and experience of Mercy.
 - I'm going to miss the meetings. They have been such a blessing and an inspiration.
 - Elizabeth Davis's summing up of all that has happened over these past months captured the experience so well.

- Once again, thank you. It is wonderful being part of this great family.
- MGP has opened my eyes to a whole new way of looking at the environment and given me a determination to listen to the cry of the earth and to work towards improving my understanding of what we are doing to creation.
- A wonderful resource to delve deeper into Mercy and what it means as a global expression of Compassion.
- I particularly enjoyed the artistic presentations which were refreshing and new.
- Being part of the pre-launch four-day programme was a most inspiring experience which filled me with enthusiasm for MGP. It was good to meet with the wider Mercy family and to share insights and understandings.
- I would like to thank the CLT, MGP team and all who contributed so generously with their time and creativity to develop a new way of seeing Mercy, in a global context.

Comments from the Sisters of Mercy (Congregation in Newfoundland and Peru)

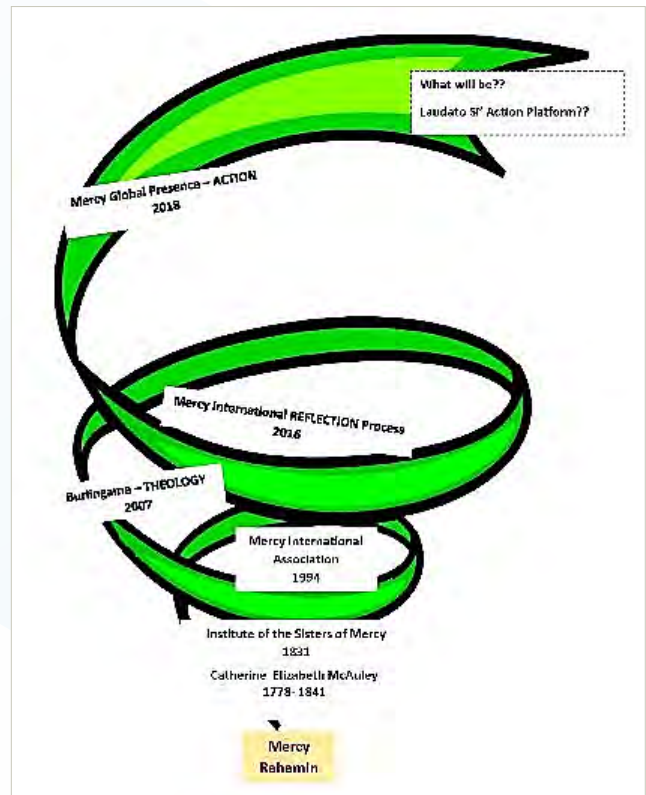
- Meaning and Impressions
 - These are a few sentences to what the Global Presence Process means to me. It has broadened my vision of Mercy. It has made me much more aware of our oneness in Mercy. It has spoken clearly to me of our Mercy Connection.
 - It has stressed the importance of listening to the Cry of the Poor and the cry of the Earth.
 - The exposure of all our lived experiences in Mercy has been very enriching for me. The excellent Global Presence Process has been an excellent display of our theme Mercying.
 - Mercy is certainly alive in our many ministries. Desmond Tutu in the pocket booklet *Meeting the Global Citizen In You*, Says “lives will be changed when we take on the challenge of becoming the Global Citizen who resides in each of us”.
 - The “Mercy Global Presence” process for me has been an expansive experience in that “The Global Village” became so much smaller for me. Over time I became more aware of the needs of my brothers and sisters and Mother Earth as we were exposed to the various segments.
 - I feel a greater sense of being connected and responsibility for “The Cry of the Poor and the Cry of the Earth” I have grown in my appreciation of the beauty and magnificence of the gift of God’s Creation.
 - I am grateful to the Team for their Leadership in this matter. I am grateful to my Circle for the depth of their sharing and for allowing me to be part of the group which adds to my sense of belonging.
- The Mercy Global Presence encounter has been a time of connectiveness, oneness and has helped broaden my horizons of our Mercy World. It has challenged me to look beyond my picket fence to the Global Village and how this process has brought the Mercy World that much closer together.
- I feel the opportunity to share and respond in our Circle Groups, Wisdom Groups and Mercy gatherings have made this possible.
- The MGP, has been a wonderful experience for me. The 4 Poster Meetings, the Poems, Artworks, and beautiful Prayers, have made me aware of the many needs of the Poor and Mother Earth our Home. I feel More connected with the whole of Creation, and in communion with everything God has made. Our Zoom Meetings has helped us to be One with the Poor and the way we have Treated our World.
- Thanks to the Team for their Leadership and making us more aware that Life is centered over all that God has given us.



- Not only has Mercy Global Presence expanded my consciousness but it has invited me to walk this journey with others in a very real way. Through images, poetry, writings, art, music, posters and zoom we connected countries and cultures as we engaged and enriched one another in a way we never dreamed.
- Mercy Global Presence expanded my sense of and appreciation for being part of our amazing and ever-evolving universe.
- Through the Mercy Global Presence Process this scripture passage which has a much deeper meaning and called me to a greater consciousness. “God owns this planet and all its riches. The earth and every creature belong to God.
- My phrase to describe my experience of the Mercy Global Presence Process would be “*a deep well of refreshing nourishment*”.
- Without the posters and the zoom sessions I feel my consciousness would not have been raised as it has been. Some words or phrases which had a call for me to the human and to the nonhuman.
- New language/new theologies helpful for shaping the future of Mercy:
 - Integral Ecology
 - Deep Incarnation
 - God has mercified the universe into being
- Ecological Conversion:
 - Listening to God's heartbeat
 - “Enough theology”
 - “Integrated and engaged”
 - I am a face / image of God, you are a face / image of God, all creation is a face / image of God! What image / face of God do I present, project to others, to the world?
 - witnesses of Mercy – awaken ourselves and others from harmful sleep of our inhumanity
 - global connections – in a global world, there will be a Mercy Global Presence
 - heartbeat of God
 - Degradation of Earth
 - Displacement of Persons
 - interconnected/interdependent/collaboration
 - a world of displacement – mercy global presence will champion inclusion
 - new image of God
 - image of mirror/crack
 - global contemplation
 - compassionate heart
 - kinship as a planetary people
 - global heartbeat
 - witness the sacredness of all creation
 - one with the heartbeat of God
 - we will model a world of welcome and inclusion

- A call for me to the human and to the nonhuman:
 - Awakening
 - Presence
 - Right Relationships
 - Global Awareness
 - Deep Listening
 - Cross Cultural Awareness
 - Rich Sharing
 - Cross Cultural Awareness
 - Deeper Desire to Connect
 - Call to a culture of Compassion
 - Right Relationships
- Zooming - new way of connecting with Mercy Sisters in the Mercy World — Voices of Mercy delivered through 'imaging the Face of God in all Creation' through the Introductory articles, Creating circles and cultures of mercy, Distinct voices, Grassroots ministry, Mercy global action, Theological Imaging cultivating mercy, reflective prayers, Artistic response—joining together in spite of our differences; shaping our consciousness to other ways of 'being' mercy now in the new normal—continuing our Gospel call, restoring balance in a hurting world.
- Zoom, sacredness of the earth, cosmic Christ.
- The pandemic gave the opportunity to connect the Mercy world via Zoom; So many were very pleased to be so connected in such rich sharing. Wonderful way to express and experience Mercy global presence.
- We express much gratitude to the Guiding Committee: Mary Reynolds/Berneice Loch, Elizabeth Davis and Anne Walsh as well as to members of the regional coordinating committees and to the Sisters/ Associates who engaged. Anne was at centre of all activities from the beginning and made sure that all logistics were in place—a very big thank you to her.
- The end component—a global sharing re the last poster and the ending of this phase of the MGP—was cut short and did not reach the usual celebratory closure:-
- New Theologies:
 - Transformation, conversion, mercying, universal love
 - We are being called to have a global vision/world as a kinship of planetary people
 - Mercy as “a womb where we were formed—a part of us from the beginning— here to stay, always moving, always fluid.” Age of mercy expanding, constantly unfolding in mercy, listening to the voices of the Spirit and the Cosmos, seeing people and creation in new ways, “nurturing the innate capacity to see the best in all people” and
 - collaborating in the creative work of God since “God’s mercies are new every morning” (Lam. 3: 23)
 - Furthering conversions of transformation to become what God dreams for us.
 - “Good today, better tomorrow”
 - Finding “life” in the midst of “death “ HOPE IS BORN
 - Living the essence of compassion
 - Contemplation in action; Becoming “neighbour “ to the “unknown person” who crosses our path and needs our “help”

- A Samaritan, Sinodal Congregation
 - Through the Mercy Global Presence Process this scripture passage which has a much deeper meaning and called me to a greater consciousness. “God owns this planet and all its riches. The earth and every creature belong to God
 - Reflection re Cosmic Advent wreath much appreciated as was reflection of theology of deep Incarnation
- Rendition of Mercy Global Presence in context of theological reflection model and the processes RSM have engaged in globally – Theology, Reflection, Action (see diagram at right):
 - Word Cloud from one of Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Americas gatherings, collecting the sharing around the theme *Presence to Earth*



Comments from the Sisters of Mercy (Aotearoa New Zealand)

- Creative Response: Earth and Integral Ecology, The Global Heartbeat
 - I was invited into creating a power point presentation that expressed the title above from an Aotearoa perspective. In discussion with the 2 other members I created and contributed reflections, graphics and my own art work into a 19-page moving PP presentation. I greatly appreciated this invitation and participation as it gave me entry into this powerful reflective process.
- Reflection: Faith Traditions of Mercy
 - I was invited to assist with input, graphics and lay out of this beautiful Reflection. This March reflection included our own Lent tradition and also the Christchurch massacres. Once again, I greatly appreciated being invited into this opportunity that also took me into all of the offerings for this month and then to see our graphics and quotes used in the posters for other months.



- Reflection: Presence Of and To Earth
 - I was invited to assist with graphics and lay out of this beautiful Reflection.
 - Once again, I greatly appreciated being invited into this opportunity that took me into the giftedness of poetry, song writing and reflections from my own congregation and in all of the offerings for this month and then to see our graphics and quotes used in the posters in other months.
- Through the Mercy Global Presence processes I enjoyed the depth of sharing across all the months from a global perspective. I loved the poster summary of the previous month. I did get the most of each month's poster printed in A3 and shared them with others.
- I began a small group of sisters from St Catherine's Rest Home following my trip to Ireland in September 2019 to attend the Jubilee and courses held at MIA. Unfortunately, the prolonged lockdowns last year which prevented me even going into St Mary's because of restrictions on rest homes halted that initiative. However, I continued to use that material personally and see an opportunity to reuse the archived material when I am allowed back into St Mary's when Covid restrictions ease.
- Rosary House Spiritual Life Centre in Otautahi Christchurch New Zealand has facilitated groups meeting together physically on each theme of each of the four segments starting in February 2020 and finishing in August 2021.
- For the first theme, three groups met, then combined to make two groups. For Segments 1 and 2, participants attended two sessions on each theme and then reduced to one meeting per theme. Over the eighteen months approximately 47 people participated with an attendance of about 15 for each theme. Twenty-one Sisters of Mercy have participated and 12 of these have been regular attendees during the eighteen months. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds, included a small mix of ethnicity, and some were from other Christian denominations.
- As a facilitator, it was personally enriching to be drawn into the wealth of resources for each theme. Before each session it was exciting to select what might best engage the particular group in the setting in which we would meet. It was just as satisfying to note the engagement of group members with one another at the session and the appreciative comments as the group dispersed. It has been both a learning and bonding experience together.
- MGP has been a very helpful way for our several members of the MGA Network and the previous MGA group to meet, reflect and bond together in Mercy.
- Connection and support of Sisters and Partners in Mission who are both employed and members of the Young Mercy Leaders from Ireland, UK, Newfoundland, Philippines, USA, ANZ.
- The bond and support expressed between we mainly older Sisters of Mercy and leading young women is amazing and inspiring.
- Has potential to connect Mercy women internationally.
- It would be good to explore ways to expand such a programme in each country – schools, colleges, ministries, boards, sisters, and partners connecting internationally.

SUMMARIES OF REGIONAL GATHERINGS

Global Contemplation on the Integrating Poster: Mercy and Faith Traditions

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 27–30 July 2020

During the last week of July 2020, the vision statement of Mercy International Association came alive as “the inspiration and energies of the Sisters of Mercy, our associates, colleagues and partners worldwide” were gathered in a reflection on “Mercy and Faith Traditions.” This theme was month one of segment two of Mercy Global Presence, a segment which focused on Mercy in varied expressions. For the first time in our history, members of the Mercy family in more than twelve countries gathered by Zoom in three regional conversations to move more intentionally into the reality of Mercy Global Presence. Young and old, women and men, associates and partners in Mercy sat at three tables of Mercy and shared experiences of learning from world faith traditions and indigenous religions. Coordinators from each institute and congregation facilitated the conversations. Anne Walsh and Adele Howard rsm enlivened the technology.



A poster which echoed paintings and a poem, words from the Quran, prophetic voices from students and Indigenous peoples, and images of diverse faiths was the touchstone for global contemplation on right relationships, richer appreciation of our own house of faith, personal/community/social transformation, and a sense of the sacredness of all life (human and other-than human). For three moments in time, “the longings and efforts of the entire Mercy family” echoed through English and Spanish voices and the profound resonance of the Maori word, *whakawhanaungatanga* (right relationship).



Catherine's words found new and hope-filled meaning, “The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us and oh what a blessing... the true spirit of Mercy flowing on us.”

Over two hundred participants listened, shared life experiences, spoke prophetically, imagined new ways of Mercy, and delighted in the ways in which global and indigenous religions connect Mercy, creation of the cosmos, and Earth. The greetings and the chatting that the participants shared in the presence of each other were touching. In the midst of a global pandemic and worldwide protests about exclusion, this was a welcomed expression of a Mercy worldview rooted in an integral ecology which hears the cries of Earth and the Poor, sees them as one, and answers with passion and justice. God spoke, “My mercy embraces all things,” and we promised, “To be your mercy.” Mercy International Association birthed new depth and richness during this July week. Catherine's words found new and hope-filled meaning, “The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us and oh what a blessing... the true spirit of Mercy flowing on us.”

Global Contemplation on the Integrating Poster: Mercy and Degradation of Earth

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 10–13 August 2020

“We are in Need of Respirators Urgently!’ Thus Cry Out the Oceans of the World”—these disturbing words precede a video shown in Month Two of Segment Two of Mercy Global Presence: Mercy and Degradation of Earth. The images of oceans and marine species suffocating from plastic debris, our experience in this pandemic time with hospitals struggling to find enough ventilators to support very ill people with the COVID-19 virus, and the stark memory of the death of George Floyd crying out “I can’t breathe”, all come together to remind us yet again that the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor are visibly and sadly one. More than two hundred and sixty participants echoed this connection in their conversations during the second week of August 2020 in three regional gatherings centered on the integrating poster for *Mercy and Degradation of Earth*.

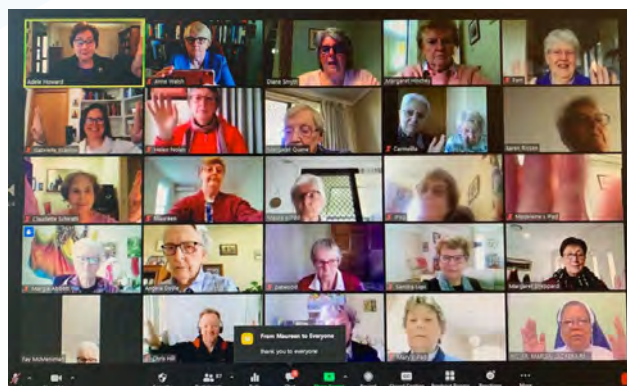


Voices in many Spanish and English accents from Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Guyana, Honduras, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States spoke to the realities of this world today which demand that Mercy be lived and shared in myriad new ways. The engaging conversations were held in the large group and in small break-out groups with older and younger participants, women and men, and Sisters and Associates and partners in Mercy. There was frequent mention of the wisdom of listening more attentively and carefully to the voices of

Indigenous peoples who have much to teach from their ancestral memory and their lived experience close to Earth.

The images on the poster—the suffocating ocean, the drone image of degraded landscapes, and the tree frog and the violet—were a study in contrasts. So, too, were the conversations. Taking to heart Mary Bilderback’s words, “I am uneasy with the statement that the Earth has been degraded,” some challenged that it is not Earth who is degraded, but it is people who are degrading her. Some pleaded passionately for more emphasis on the practical-active aspect of living Mercy to effect desperately needed change in the here-and-now. Others celebrated the bringing together of the practical-active with the reflective-spiritual to ensure transformation for the long term. Hearing the words from the prophet Hosea, some lamented that “the land mourns and all who live in it languish” while the wild animals, birds and fish are perishing. Others focused on the pain of the pandemic for people in ways that could never have been imagined: increasing poverty, deepening hunger, increasing sexual exploitation, and inequitable impact on the most vulnerable persons.

Global Mercy was alive and well, diverse and inclusive, realistic and visionary in these regional conversations which connected all corners of our planet in energizing and hope-filled ways. In the words spoken, the faces animated in joy or in empathy, and the brief but moving words in the chat room, we responded to Catherine’s challenge to us, “Speak as your mind directs and always act with more courage when the ‘mammon of unrighteousness’ is in question.” How blessed we are to be invited to live new expressions of the works of mercy in this new time!



How blessed we are to be invited to live new expressions of the works of mercy in this new time!

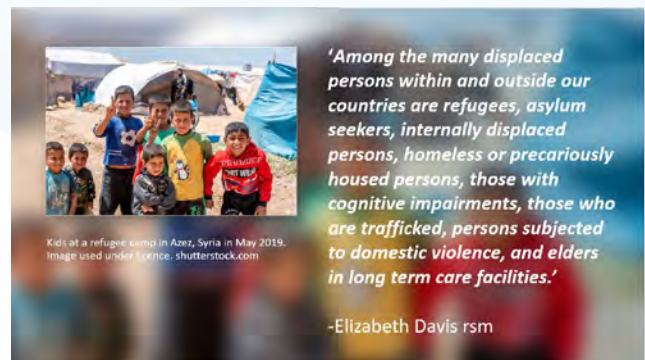
Global Contemplation on the Integrating Poster: Mercy and Displacement of Persons

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 25-27 August 2020

“What a paradox life is!” The opening words on the poster for Mercy and the Displacement of Persons set the context for the three global conversations on this theme which is at the heart of Mercy ministry. Held during the week of August 24, 2020, the conversations were reflections on the voices and images from Month Three of Segment Two of the Mercy Global Presence process centered on “Mercy.”

The paradox was visible in the very images portrayed and words used in the poster. The participants noted the captivating image of smiling Syrian children, living in the midst of a refugee camp, brought tears to our eyes even as it gave hope to our hearts. The modern-day Pietà entitled Good Friday 2020, with the healthcare workers holding the respirator to the face of Jesus and knowing that all their efforts were in vain, gave us yet another window into the suffering of this pandemic time. The young Aboriginal boy with his coloured drum in the apparently dry desert gave more hope in “Reclaiming Place: Continuing the Story.” It linked the displacement of persons back to the previous conversations on the degradation of Earth—the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor are one. The image of the mother of Mercy holding in her embrace those with the COVID-19 virus, their loved ones and the healthcare workers, was yet another source of hope and a reminder of the depth of our tradition in grounding that hope. The invisibility of the Homeless Christ (male or female) touched many in the conversation circles. One participant quoted Pope Francis, “On the one hand, it is essential to find a cure for this small but terrible virus, which has brought the whole world to its knees. On the other, we must also cure a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalization and the lack of protection for the weakest.”

The paradox was expressed in heartfelt ways as participant after participant spoke of displaced persons in her or his reality—from the Mexico/United States border to the borders of Peru to the rural areas of Australia to the streets of St. John's Newfoundland to the communities of northern Ontario to the cities of Australia to the towns of Peru to the long term care residences of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The displacement was highly visible and subtly invisible. It was within countries, and it was international. The ministry was heart-breaking and hope-restoring. Over and over again, the participants showed their struggles with being people of privilege in a world where so many have so little. Over and over again, they mirrored Mercy alive in the darkest places. One participant spoke of an Indigenous group who greet each other with the words, “How are the connections?”



How can we not act when we call ourselves people of Mercy?

The paradox was evident in attempts to balance contemplation and action. How can we not act when there is so much suffering and we have so much? How can we not create the connections that make action more effective? How can we not act when we call ourselves people of Mercy? And, yet, how can we act unless we also find systemic ways to change cultures and attitudes? How can we change systems and the hearts of people unless we ourselves take time to reflect on the realities of which we are part and to which we contribute by our own privileged lifestyle? How can we act and reflect if we do not time apart to find our way? The quotation from Jeremiah (Jer 6:16) spoke to participants about standing, looking, asking, listening, and walking.

All three global conversations had returning participants and new participants, numbering in total 247 persons who were distributed fairly equally across the three groups. It seemed to all that we were finding a rhythm in our gatherings, learning to forget that the technology was there and leaning in to touch each other in these vibrant circles of Mercy.

Global Contemplation on the Integrating Poster: New Foundations in Mercy

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 8-9 September 2020

An elegant Catherine McAuley rose, anchored by a strong green leaf, touched by a tiny raindrop/teardrop on its golden petal, and grounded by Catherine's tomb centered the global conversations on the integrating poster for New Foundations in Mercy. In this fourth theme of segment two in Mercy Global Presence, 241 women and men of Mercy from thirteen countries gathered to reflect on where Mercy is calling us today. Despite these times of chaos, uncertainty, anxieties, growing poverty, climate emergency and increasing disparity, the conversations spoke to hope visibly rising among us and around us. In the words of one participant, "My way of trying to announce hope is to seek to bring the new dream, new images, new spiritualities to the foreground of life rather than background." Hope is rising.

Hope is rising in the new ways of ministry in which Mercy is responding – new presence of Mercy along border crossings; new presence of Mercy to migrants, refugees, displaced persons and restoration of Earth; new ways of living the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy (even adding an eighth work of showing Mercy to Earth); and new ways of partnering in most unexpected ways of responding in Mercy.

Hope is rising in the simpler lifestyle to which the times are calling us. This call to simplicity comes as we are socially isolated for safety and protection during the global pandemic.

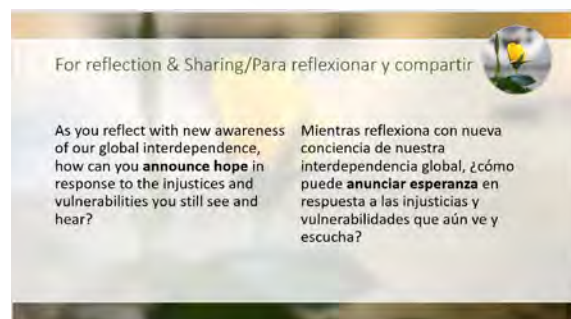
Decluttering is happening in uninvited yet welcomed ways as simplicity becomes a new source of energy for community and for ministry, giving us the freedom to allow in the new.

Hope is rising through masks and social distancing which demand that we find new ways of communicating and relating. Facetime and Zoom have become metaphors for a way of communicating which we would never have imagined and which we would never have accepted if we had not been driven by the realities of the times. We have used those new technologies in wonderfully creative and freeing ways – no matter what our age or degree of familiarity with modern technology.

Hope is rising in our new sense of courage and a new solidarity which is emerging amid suffering. Tears of pain during one Zoom global conversation become tears of joy in the next Zoom conversation as we reach out to each other, offering support and compassion and gratitude. We are learning anew the joy that young people bring as, together, we listen and learn about care for our common home. The young student Sophie Snowball's sculpture of the fish swimming in the ocean and in the light and made from found materials of single-use plastics becomes a symbol of the "found materials" of our tradition now given new life. The Icelandic master storyteller and environmental activist,

Andri Snær Magnason says one of the flaws of our civilization is its inability to see itself into the future. Young people help us see ourselves into the future.

Hope is rising in the growing appreciation of diversity and inclusion as we see, hear and share Mercy experiences from our lived experiences of Mercy flowing from one source but lived in many realities. The simple word "listen" has new layers of meaning as we realize how rich is the tradition which we are privileged to call ours and how rich are the traditions which we are privileged to receive from others. The simple



word “stranger” has new layers of meaning as we heard again Maureen Murphy’s poetic words, “Who are we if not kin?” Valarie Kaur’s *See No Stranger* was named by several participants as another expression of “radical and joyful practices to heal ourselves and transform the world around us.”

Hope is rising in our newfound confidence in our capacity within ourselves and with others. As one of us said, “We may be aged but we are well, alive and mercying!” Another reminded us that presence, encounter, and solidarity are the true marks of our living into hope. And yet another said that this newfound hope demands not only a new mindset but a new heartset!

This set of conversations ended with a global contemplation on the eight integrating posters. Words said aloud echoed themes threaded across all posters: “God dancing with creation,” “God mercying the universe into being,” “Earth freed to restore herself,” “God’s infinite affection for us,” and “Were not our hearts burning within us?” Mary Sullivan’s words were quoted with joy, “If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it—one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk—one person at a time.”

“If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it—one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk—one person at a time.”

From the last week of July 2020 to the first week of September 2020, Mercy International Association’s vision was given new resonance and new energy in 12 global conversations on 4 themes by 1008 participants from 19 countries. We echo the wonderful Swahili words of thanks: Asante Sana! Asante Sana! Asante Sana!

Mercy Global Presence ~ Regional Gatherings in Pentecost Week 2021

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 24-27 May 2021



From 24 May 2021 to 27 May 2021, Sisters of Mercy, Associates, and partners in Mercy met in regional gatherings to reflect on the first two themes of the last segment of the Mercy Global Presence process. The themes were “Contemplative Seeing” and “A Compassionate Heart.” One hundred and eight participants from twelve countries (Australia, Canada, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Aotearoa New Zealand, Peru, Argentina, Cambodia, Guam, and South Africa) participated in the last set of regional gatherings for the process.

This segment of the MGP process is centering on “integration.” It is grounded in the belief that braiding texts, distinct voices, different genres, and other art forms with ecological worldviews (Indigenous, scientific, and religious) can create new understanding and deepening wisdoms about the world and our place in it. The first three segments of the MGP process have begun that braiding which continues now through the four new themes of the fourth segment. The three regional gatherings were a living experience of the braiding of diverse voices and writings and art into new images of God, new language, new theologies, and a renewed spirituality bringing us closer to the new weaving of mercy for the second decade of this twenty-first century.

While it is impossible to capture the depth and breadth of the reflections across the three meetings, six images reflect some of the fruits of the energizing conversations:

The mirror—the lines from Laretta Rivera-Williams’ poem, “If I were a mirror,” spoke to the desire in every person of Mercy who seeks to reflect the compassionate heart of God in all our relationships—with God, with Earth and Earth beings, and with other humans. There was a renewed sense of being made in the image of God and of Jesus the Christ who so often in the Gospels “was filled with compassion.”

The krama—Denise Coughlan rsm who ministers in Cambodia shared with the group the image of the Cambodian krama which she saw as mirroring Catherine’s shawl (shown in the poignant statue of Catherine at All Hallows’ School in Brisbane). The krama is a traditional and modern Cambodian garment which has many uses (a towel, a scarf, a face covering, a blanket, a wrap to hold a baby). It is worn by women, men, and children. Catherine’s shawl is a metaphor for mercy wrapped around, bringing comfort and warmth, bringing peace and justice, bringing compassion and daring. It is worn by all, it is shared by all, it is needed by all.

The crack in everything—the verse from Leonard Cohen’s poem “Anthem” gave comfort to many of the participants, “Ring out the bells that still can ring Forget your perfect offering There is a crack, a crack in everything That’s how the light gets in.” As we become more aware of our fragility and vulnerability globally with the pandemic, communally with the decreasing numbers and increasing age of Sisters of Mercy, and personally, there is solace in knowing that the light can only come through the cracks! We must allow our wounds to let the light in.

The eyes mirroring our past and present—the image in the centre of the “Contemplative Seeing” poster (painted by Ma. Victoria Pederanga) drew much attention and gave much hope. The heart-shaped face of the woman with the image of Catherine McAuley reflected in one eye and the child with the mask in the other eye spoke profoundly to every participant. The words accompanying the painting were “Looking through the eyes of love – embrace with Mercy and Hope.” Participants marveled at how the artist can say so much with a few strokes of the brush or words of the pen. The call was to see with the eyes of the heart.

The heartbeat of God—many were drawn to the questions posed in the reflective prayer prepared by Sandra Lupi rsm, “how do we hear God’s heartbeat?” The very invitation to listen to God’s heartbeat is gift—to listen to God’s heartbeat in the universe, in Earth, and in persons with whom we share this life’s journey. Contemplation and action come together in this image of intimacy.

Whispers becoming a chorus—these words from Julia Morisi’s essay reminded all participants that the pandemic of kindness can outweigh the present COVID-19 pandemic scouring our world. It highlighted the inspiration that each one can give the other, no matter what our age or role or personal circumstances.

In the three conversations, reference was made to every single image and every single quotation. Participants also delighted in the ways in which the images and words together created two works of art that themselves added depth to the themes. They expressed deep gratitude to Anne Walsh and Clare Locke for creating the posters which resonated with their thinking and, at the same time, called them to new ways of seeing and being mercy.

The very invitation to listen to God’s heartbeat is gift—to listen to God’s heartbeat in the universe, in Earth, and in persons with whom we share this life’s journey.

And, in several ways, there were expressions of hope and joy that Earth is finally one who is present with us in all our reflections. We no longer speak about Earth as object; she has become one with us, sharing with us the heartbeat of God.

Even though there were two more themes to complete (“Mercying” and “Creating Circles and a Culture of Mercy”), this was the last of the regional gatherings. Deep gratitude was expressed for the overall Mercy Global Presence process. The gratitude was complemented by a plea not to lose the global connections that this MGP process has allowed and, even more, encouraged. Participants rejoiced in the opportunities given to connect right across the globe, across so many Mercy communities and ministries, across so many cultures and lived experiences.

It was fitting that the regional gatherings were held just days after Pentecost Sunday. In each of the gathering prayers beginning the conversation, the words from the prophet Joel (2:28-32) said by Peter at his homily on the first Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18) were proclaimed:

I will pour out my Spirit on everyone.

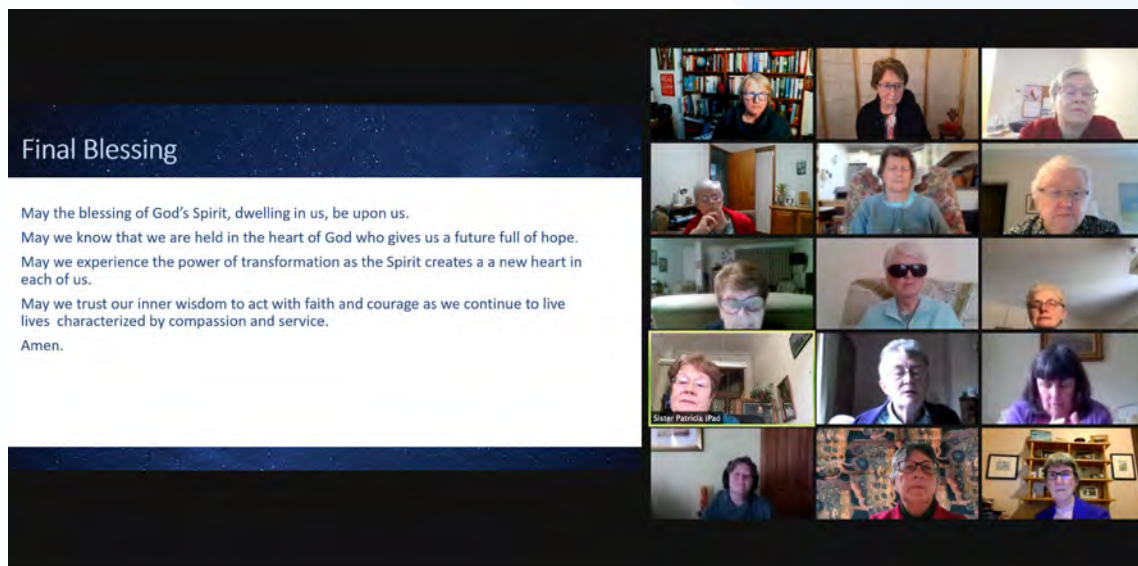
Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message.

Your young ones will see visions and your old ones will have dreams.

Yes, even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in these days.

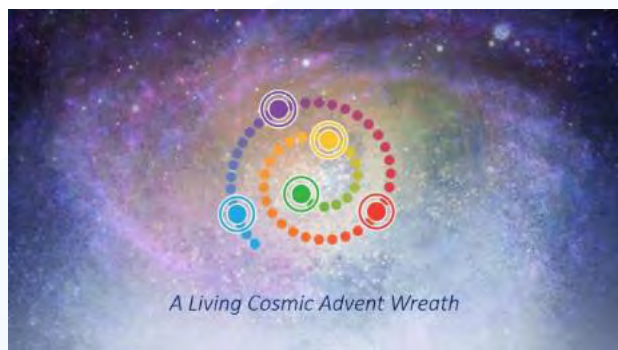
For the participants, the three regional gatherings were times for sacred conversations, for prophesying, and for truly global contemplation. Now that we have seen what is possible in connections across countries, congregations and institutes, languages, and cultures, we cannot go back. Mercy International Association must build on this process to ensure that we grow in our braiding of the new garment of Mercy for our time, for Earth, and for all Earth beings.



A Living Cosmic Advent Wreath (2020) Embraced in Mercy

Reflection from the Guiding Team ~ 1-2 December 2020

A Living Cosmic Advent Wreath – during three regional gatherings held in the first week of Advent 2020, Sisters, Associates and Partners in Mercy (each one of whom is a channel of God's mercy in our world in this time) created together a living Cosmic Advent Wreath. Two hundred and three Mercy women and men from twelve countries (Australia, Canada, Guyana, Guam, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States of America) shared their reflections which had been gathered in personal and communal contemplation begun two weeks before the regional gatherings.



The Cosmic Advent Wreath is rooted in "deep incarnation" – week one: Birth of the Universe; week two: Birth of the solar system; week three: Birth of Jesus the Christ; and week four: My Birth into the Whole Cosmic Body of the Universe). The fifth moment is centered on "All is One," that moment which Pope Francis speaks about as the "joy of our hope." In our personal and communal contemplation prior to the regional gatherings, for each of the five moments we were encouraged to reflect on three questions: what sadness do I feel? What joy do I feel? What is my dream born out of...?

From the first regional gathering for the Asia Pacific which began with a welcome in Te Reo Maori and English to the closing with its living Christmas blessing (Pat Bergen, csj – "May the Star of inclusive, poured out, communing love direct every decision you make on your journey"), this was truly a moment of global contemplation. Music, images, poetry, and conversation were shared and treasured. All five moments came alive during the three gatherings.

God's love outpoured in the creation of the Cosmos – participants asked "What is trying to incarnate through me/us at this moment of our evolutionary journey? How do we enable the unfolding of the universe? What do we need to do/be to awaken?" Meister Eckhart was quoted, "God creates the entire universe fully and totally in the present now. . . God creates the whole cosmos in the innermost depths of every soul now." The full moon during the week which held the regional gatherings was a gift, reminding us of our shared place in the Cosmos.

God's incarnation in the creation of the solar system – many spoke to the natural disasters and the loss of home of so many throughout our globe. This led to an awareness of a new call to respond together to create new places and spaces where the incarnation can happen for those suffering poverty and homelessness. One participant quoted **Duane Elgin's words**, "Where a dead-universe perspective generates alienation, environmental destruction, and despair, a living-universe perspective generates feelings of communion, stewardship, and the promise of a higher pathway for humanity." The sense of the living and intimate presence of our common home was reflected in the words, "The Earth has music for those who listen."

"Where a dead-universe perspective generates alienation, environmental destruction, and despair, a living-universe perspective generates feelings of communion, stewardship, and the promise of a higher pathway for humanity."

God's incarnation in the person of Jesus the Christ—for most participants, there was an awareness that “deep incarnation” is new to our thinking, to our theology and to our engaged spirituality – new but most welcomed. Attention was drawn to [an article](#) on November 26, 2020, in The Irish Catholic written by Bairbre Cahill, “An Advent invitation: sit with the depth and power and pain of the incarnation.” In the article, Ms. Cahill says, “Incarnation invites us into a radically different relationship with the world, a relationship where everything and everyone matters. This Advent, how would it challenge and shape my faith to accept such an invitation?”

God's incarnation in each created being, human and other-than-human – Duane Elgin asks if we are fundamentally biological or bio-cosmic. His answer begins with the conviction that, “in a living universe, our physical existence is permeated and sustained by an aliveness that is inseparable from the larger universe. Seeing ourselves as part of the unbroken fabric of creation awakens our sense of connection with, and compassion for, the totality of life. We recognize our bodies as precious, biodegradable vehicles for acquiring ever-deepening experiences of aliveness.”

“Incarnation invites us into a radically different relationship with the world, a relationship where everything and everyone matters...”

The most poignant reflection on this fourth moment which flows from the trust that each one has as an incarnation of an in-dwelling God came with an invitation to prayer. We were invited to pray in solidarity with the Sisters of Mercy in Whitby, North Yorkshire, who had just lost their third Sister to COVID-19 virus in ten days. We remembered with sadness and gratitude the lives of Sisters Mary Alphonsus, Mary Winifred and Mary Eileen who have now joined the community of Mercy in heaven.

All is One—from a simple circle of greenery marked with four candles to a living circle of humans and other-than-humans, the living Cosmic Advent Wreath gathers all the circles we form within the precious communion of all creation. Rooted in our rich traditions, this Advent time of expectation centres on the ever-unfolding incarnations of our compassionate and loving God in the ever-expanding universe and in the ever-flowing expressions of mercy alive among all beings. Despite the misery, degradation and suffering of this time, we find hope in the One who created us and who creates us, the One who invites us to be co-creators, and the One who gives us the courage and strength to go on.

Among the most precious gifts shared during the three regional gatherings was [a new hymn](#), “Cosmic Advent”, composed, played, and sung by a Sister of Mercy from Samoa, Paula Anamani rsm. It gives a sense of the richness and beauty of this time in which Mercy flowed out to become itself a living Cosmic Advent Wreath:

Birth of Our Universe Birth of our Solar System Birth of Our Christ Jesus God created with love God created with love God created with love All is One in God's love All is One in God's love All is One in God's love All is One in God's love All is One in God's love All is One in God's love Our Birth in the whole Christ of our Universe Cosmic Body of the Universe Be our daily star God created with love Come to the Manger of our hearts All is One in God's love With hope, peace, and love All is One in God's love All is one in God's Love Music and lyrics Paula Anamani rsm © 2020 Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand



References:

Bairbre Cahill, “An Advent invitation: sit with the depth and power and pain of the incarnation,” The Irish Catholic, 26 November 2020, accessed at <https://www.irishcatholic.com/an-advent-invitation-sit-with-the-depth-and-power-and-pain-of-the-incarnation/>

Duane Elgin, “Why We Need to Believe in a Living Universe,” HuffPost, 16 July 2011, accessed at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/living-universe_b_862220 or.

Suggested sites for tracking stars:

- StarTracker, accessed at <https://sites.google.com/site/pyopyostudioapp/>.
- Google Sky, accessed at <https://www.google.com/sky/>.
- SkyView, accessed at <https://www.terminaleleven.com/skyview/iphone/>.
- NASA App, accessed at <https://www.nasa.gov/nasaapp>.

Conclusion

A sense of braiding and weaving marked the entire Mercy Global Presence process. Diverse lived experiences, voices, genres, and wisdoms helped deepen our exploration of “global,” “mercy,” and “presence.” In contemplative moments – personally, communally, and globally, participants wove experiences of community and ministry into a new fabric of mercy to help clothe a transformed world and church come to re-birth. In our daring to become boundary walkers with amazing companions in mercy, we called forth new images of God, new language, new theologies, new spiritualities, new ministries, new ways of being church, and a new sense of humans living in a sacred communion of all creation. We promised anew our commitment to ecological conversion.

“Hurra for foundations, makes the old young and the young merry.” Mercy Global Presence is a new foundation among us. Catherine's words to us in 1841 now echo in a new way which she could never have imagined but one in which we know she is delighting. May God's promise to us in Jeremiah be the impetus for our promise given in the vision of MIA: “Standing with the displaced, we will model a world of welcome and inclusion. Actively engaged in the protection of our Common Home we will witness the sacredness of all creation.” May the gifts of our Mercy charism and our global presence give us the energy we need to be Sisters of Mercy and people of Mercy in our world so “in need of God's compassion and Mercy.”

– Elizabeth Davis rsm

For the Guiding Team (Berneice Loch rsm, Elizabeth Davis rsm, Anne Walsh) and Congregation and Institute Coordinators (Adele Howard rsm, Carmel McDonough rsm, Diane Smyth rsm, Elizabeth Marrie rsm, Josephine Davies rsm, Judith Moroney rsm, Marian Ladrera rsm, Marianne Comfort, Patricia McMahon rsm, Paula Anamani rsm, Sandra Lupi rsm, Sheila Curran rsm, Valda Dickinson rsm)

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*'As we deepen our ability
To be present to Earth
May we know that everything
Is an expression
Of a Oneness that is dynamically alive.*

*May we learn to communicate with
The consciousness of Earth
And all sentient beings.
Truly sensing that
we are cosmic stuff
embedded in the ecology
of the Whole...'*

Carmel Bracken rsm (The Congregation), 'A 2020 Vision',
Artistic Response: Presence to Earth, Segment Three

www.mercyglobalpresence.org

