



PRAYERS

Sisters of Mercy's Critical Concerns Through the Lens of Nonviolence

The Sisters of Mercy were founded out of a deep concern for persons who are poor. Today, that commitment is focused in five “critical concerns” that we address through prayer; attention to personal, communal and institutional choices; education; advocacy with legislators and other government leaders; and corporate engagement.

These Critical Concerns are focused on nonviolence, immigration, women, care of earth, and racism.

We believe these areas of critical concern are all interconnected and what affects one also affects the others as part of the web of life's connections. At one time we may have a more concentrated focus on one but a closer look allows us to see how each hinges on the other and forms a whole.

The prayers and reflection pieces to follow view Mercy's Critical Concerns using the lens of nonviolence.

We invite everyone to use these resources and to share with others.



Nonviolence and Immigration



Opening Prayer

Leader: O God of Compassion and Peace bless us with an awareness of your presence with us as we gather together in this space.

All: O Compassionate, peaceful God, we are grateful for your presence and ask to be open and receptive to your call to be nonviolent.

Reading:

A vagrant, a destitute wanderer with dusty feet, finds his way down a new road. A homeless God, lost in the night, without papers, without identification, without even a number, a frail expendable exile lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world and entrusts Himself to sleep.

Thomas Merton, "Hagia Sophia" IV Sunset, The Hour of Compline, Salve, Collected Poems, p. 369

Have you ever been surrounded by darkness, unable to see and perhaps feeling a bit fearful? Did your heart race, your hands perspire and your thoughts become confused? Many of our immigrant brothers and sisters live this scenario every day. Homeless, without papers, without identification-- they are forced to live in the shadows due to a broken and punitive immigration system.

Those who have come to our shores are people much like our own families. They are mothers and fathers looking for a better way of life and an opportunity to educate their children, put food on the table and contribute their gifts and talents. For many, access to the United States was encouraged because we had employment opportunities we were unable to fill with American workers. These new immigrants work in the food service industries and meat packing plants while others secure jobs as nannies or gardeners. Now, we are saying "No, you have lived here, contributed to our society, performed services but you cannot become citizens." This is an injustice that needs to be addressed.

We can all relate to moments of darkness, the time before the first rays of light penetrated our sorrow or despair. Do you remember what it was like when the darkness lifted? How did it feel to experience the light and to see the brightness and to no longer have to abide in the shadows?

Reflection: Our faith calls us to “welcome the stranger.” In what ways does this call resound for me in my own personal attitudes and response to the issues of immigration/migration?

Think about a time when you have been alienated or not included. What did that feel like? How might those desperately fleeing from their homelands feel when they are treated as aliens and not treated as human beings with dignity and respect?

What in me resists welcoming the immigrant?

In what way is violence connected to the immigrants need to flee their own countries?

In what way do I need to open my heart to nonviolence when considering this issue?

Sharing: Each one is invited to share his/her reflections. Be conscious of the aspects of violence that may be causing people to immigrate.

Possible Actions:

Make a commitment to read a variety of sources to obtain a balanced view of the issues surrounding immigration.

Learn about some of the issues that are forcing people to flee their lands:

- Corporations setting up business and paying an unjust, unlivable wage
- Oppression of the people through military means
- Corruption at all levels of public life
- Drug Cartels
- Gang violence
- Seizure of campesinos' land

Examine how United States policies have influenced many aspects of Immigration

Encourage Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that is compassionate and just. Call for a path to citizenship and family reunification.

Sponsor an event, retreat, gathering to inform people and to pray for a change in the system of immigration.

Closing Prayer:

O God, of Mercy and Compassion, open our heart to your grace. We ask You to:

Bless us with courage to embrace nonviolence in our everyday lives

Bless us with vision to seek alternatives when violence appears as the only solution

Encourage us to look deeply at our own complicity that allows violence to continue in our own hearts and in our world

Bless us with insight to see the roots of violence inherent in Mercy's
Critical Concerns

Bless us with the tenacity to stay committed to the struggle to shape a more peaceful, nonviolent world for all your people

O good and gracious God, source of all life,
all creation is charged with your Divine Energy.
Grant us the strength and courage, we pray,
for a radical transformation of own lives and a
deeper realization of your Kin-dom among us. Amen