



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 Women



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: "Above all be the heroine of your life, not the victim."

--Nora Ephron

To say that throughout the world young girls and women have been treated poorly is an understatement! Discrimination, disrespect, abuse and violence are too often what they must face with little or no recourse.

Women face genital mutilation, domestic violence, arranged marriages and young girls are sold into slavery. Women in war torn countries fear for their families lives; other women struggle to keep their families together, put food on the table, keep a roof over their heads while working long hours for a minimum wage unable to meet even basic human needs. Some are denied education while others spend long days laboring in sweatshops.

Yet, amid it all many do more than survive. Clothed with remarkable courage, unwavering determination, strong wills, and incredible resiliency, women have survived and even thrived despite these unjust and dehumanizing situations. They have refused to become victims and in so doing they teach us all what it means to be strong and struggle for change, never giving in to this injustice.

Mercy's Critical Concern of women challenges us to stand side by side in solidarity with our sisters and to speak up and act to change systems and structures which oppress women. We pray that our own commitment will reflect the same courage, strength and determination we have witnessed by through these women, our sisters.

Reflection:

What in our systems and structures has contributed to this disrespect, disregard and abuse of women?

Are there ways in which I may be unknowingly contributing to the perpetration of this violence, perhaps by not speaking up when I see other women being disrespected?

What are the messages that I model or reinforce for the young girls and women I come in contact with in my daily life?

What one thing can I do personally to raise awareness about this issue?

Sharing: Each one is invited to share his/her reflections and responses to the impact of violence against women in its many forms. Many instances of violence are more subtle than those mentioned in the reading. Are you aware of other forms of violence against women? How might you respond to change the situation?

Possible Actions:

Read and become more informed about some issue of violence against women and then make a commitment to act or advocate for change.

Join or support an organization that advocates for effective and comprehensive responses to violence against women and girls.

Educate yourself about the United Nations Documents that address the human rights of women and girls.

Mentor a girl or young woman.

Be a role model and support and encourage girls and women.

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 our 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