



Sisters of Mercy of the Americas 2020 Statement on Nonviolence

As 2020 begins, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas reaffirm our commitment to engage actively our Critical Concerns through the lens of nonviolence. End-of-the-year acts of hatred and violence in New York and Texas and the escalating conflict between the U.S. and Iran remind us how important this approach is.

It is impossible to separate the issue of violence from our attentiveness to (the) Earth, Women, Immigration and Racism that make up the critical concerns of our congregation. We stand ready to continue to embrace an alternative, nonviolent, response – grounded in our faith and in relationship with each other and the Earth. As Pope Francis said in his 2020 Message for Celebration of the World Day of Peace on January 1, “Mistrust and fear weaken relationships and increase the risk of violence.”

We have seen mistrust and fear result in the use of gun violence in the US on a regular basis, including the mass shooting in El Paso and the most recent Church shooting in Texas. We have seen the fear of “other” result in an increase in anti-Semitic attacks, including the most recent one in New York at the end of December, and ongoing actions rooted in white supremacy against those of us who are black and brown. And the US’s cruel, inhumane and racist immigration policies have caused untold suffering including family separation and are manifestations of a system that chooses to cultivate and then seemingly address that fear over the care for members of our human family.

We see interpersonal violence echoed in the degradation of (the) Earth for individual consumption and profit. Indigenous communities have lost access to their sacred land, water and even their lives for the benefit of extracting resources from the Earth.

Surprise, sadness, disappointment and anger are inadequate responses to each of these events because they paralyze us and lead to inaction. Our faith tells us that this is not acceptable and that we must work to make right relationships with all.

We must do more than publicly condemn acts of violence and racism and express solidarity with impacted communities.

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas are in a position to engage with communities on local and national levels, in the countries where we live and minister, to break down that mistrust and fear and to work in nonviolent ways to show a different path. Our 2017 Chapter Recommitment statement called on us to use this lens of nonviolence as a tool through which to engage in our Critical Concerns of Earth, Women, Immigration, and Anti-Racism.

As shared by Ana Maria Siufi, RSM in Argentina, “From the lens of nonviolence, we accept the challenge to become weavers of networks that defend life, spokespeople for those whose cries are silenced. We will console those whose cries find no compassion and welcome the discriminated; we will heal the unattended who suffer and companion the abandoned. We will galvanize those who close their eyes and ears to the cries of so many; we will be sowers of rights and dignity for all; we will spread the word that another model of production and consumption is possible. We will ignite the flame of peaceful resistance, mold a brotherhood and sisterhood born of love and solidarity and work for a new culture reconciled with the land. We will walk this dark journey with hope, supporting those searching for light and gospel values.” Specifically:

- We will continue to listen to fears of impacted communities and work together to find ways to call out hatred, violence and racism and forge new paths. Our Sisters and Associates in Central and South America have had success using the Alternatives to Violence Program with different groups in their communities.
- We will speak out, walk out and stand strong against US policies that foster fear, hatred, racism, and inhumane treatment of members of our human family. Our participation in nonviolent actions to end child detention in 2019 was a manifestation of this commitment.
- We will continue to learn and offer spaces for all those who are part of the Mercy family to grow and hold ourselves accountable for our own individual and institutional violent, racist or divisive actions that may run counter to our commitment.

- We will respond to violence against Our Common Home by reducing our reliance on Fossil fuels, advocating for bold policies to **systemically** address climate **emergency** and living out our commitment “to intensify efforts to align our investments with our values and...pursue education and action against practices of extractive industries that are destroying people, communities and Earth.”
- We will speak out against and address violence to women in Church and Society, following the lead of our Sisters and Associates in Central and South America who have participated in demonstrations against femicide and other ills of a patriarchal society.

We find ourselves inspired by our many partners in this journey, from local community organizations, national networks and faith-based organizations, entities of the Catholic Church and individuals. The Catholic Church has offered several examples of hope for an alternative approach. Two notable ones are the stories from the Synod on the Pan-Amazon Region and its call for ecological conversion, and El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz’s pastoral letter *Night Will Be No More*, which articulates the intersectionality of race, gun violence, and the ongoing militarization of the border.

As we embark on this journey of a new decade, a new sense of hope and a recommitment to our active way of nonviolence, we look forward to all members of the Mercy family joining us in prayer and action. Now is the time. *We welcome all to join us in a “revolution of tenderness.”¹ In Catherine McAuley’s spirit of union and charity we voice the call of Jesus, “that all may be one.”²*

¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*

² Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Chapter 2017 Recommitment Statement, *Called to New Consciousness*