July 27, 2017

Dear Sisters,

“We recognize a yearning for oneness in all of creation, in all peoples and within our Institute.” - Chapter 2017 Recommitment

One month ago, our Institute Chapter body affirmed that our yearning for oneness burns deeply within us! Likewise, during our time of orientation with the new ILT—Pat Flynn, Judith Frikker, Áine O'Connor and Anne Marie Miller—the theme of oneness echoed frequently as we explored the ministry of elected leadership they will assume on August 1. As we visited with the new ILT, we remain acutely aware of how our Chapter direction and our planning for Journey of Oneness are seamless. We now want to offer you an update on our Journey of Oneness planning.

As you may recall, about a year ago we began the first phase of work on our Journey of Oneness. Over 130 sisters, staff and associates worked in teams, each focused on a critical function of Mercy life (such as new membership, justice, communications, etc.). These teams offered recommendations for each function that more fully reflect the oneness we desire as an Institute. Integral to this work were the ongoing efforts to enhance the understanding of and commitment to our Mercy charismatic as expressed in our mission, tradition, values and spirituality. All who contributed to the design phase did outstanding work on behalf of our Institute. The depth, breadth, wisdom and quality of their work were excellent. This work reflected careful analysis of each function and its opportunities to contribute to a vibrant Mercy future.

As we pass on to the new ILT all the work accomplished thus far, we believe that we are well poised to move into phase two, the development phase, of the Journey of Oneness. Our Chapter 2017
Recommitment calls us to strengthen our relationships with one another, to embrace anew our Critical Concerns and to explore our communal documents freshly so that our words will draw us ever more deeply into our Mercy future as one. In phase two, the development teams will begin work by receiving the recommendations from each of the design teams. The development teams will then continue shaping each function, building on what the design teams have recommended, producing concrete, practical and operational details for the functions. Those recommendations would also include plans for transition. As before, they will provide opportunities for consultation with sisters and those involved in each function. This work will eventually be integrated into one organizational framework that serves our life and mission in Mercy.

Our learnings from the first phase of the Journey of Oneness process lead us to pay special attention to several key aspects of our life and mission:

- First, to integrate the international dimension of our Institute in all of our functions. Conversations with our sisters from all countries in this next phase will be critical.
- Second, to assess how each function will affect the day-to-day life and mission of members.
- Third, to deepen our focus on the dismantling of institutional racism within our Institute.
- Finally, to foster conversation and consultation concerning how proposed models of governance are compatible with the work of the sisters’ life team. Although the work of the sisters’ life design team is not yet finished and the results of the sisters’ life survey are not yet ready, this input will be carefully reviewed as we consider next steps. Another aspect for careful integration with sisters’ life is the work of the health and wellness team.
We want you to know that we are aware that a fair amount of change will occur in the next few years, and we know that consistent Institute-wide communication is essential. The new ILT is ready to assume this responsibility and we trust that they will find additional and creative ways to respond to this need. Additionally, we are communicating regularly with all staff to inform them of our planning and to assure them that their expertise and commitment are valued and that our intent is to find ways to integrate all of us into this important work.

The following timeline offers some general information about next steps for the development phase:

- August 2017: Development teams will be appointed
- September 2017: Development teams will receive the work of the design teams and begin orientation to their work.
- October 2017—May 2018: Work of development teams, including consultations, takes places.
- May 2018: Teams will make recommendations to leadership.
- June 2018: Leadership will assess readiness to move to implementation.

As we end our term, we thank you once again for all the ways during these past six years that we have experienced your support—especially your prayerful support. With confidence in each of you, rooted in our God of Wisdom, Mercy and Mystery and guided by our Chapter 2017 Recommitment, we go forward trusting that Catherine’s spirit of union and charity will be with us as we respond to the call of Jesus, “that all may be one.”

In mercy,

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