



November 5, 2015

Dear Sisters,

With you, our sisters, we continue to ponder the underlying impetus for our Journey of Oneness: *Who do we, as Sisters of Mercy, desire to be for one another and for our world? How might we embody the mercy of God for a suffering world in more meaningful and impactful ways into the future?* As your collective leadership body—the Institute Leadership Conference—we recently met in St. Louis prayerfully embracing our Critical Concerns and their expressions in our world. Maria DiBello, RSM, served as our spiritual guide and asked us “to walk where there are no paths, to accept the challenge of shared visions, to delight in the demand of the gospel and to continue asking questions.”

Building on what many of you—via emails, notes and face-to-face conversations—have offered about a more timely process to deepen our identity as one Institute, the ILC discussed four areas that we want to share with you. This letter and accompanying presentation outline how the path of our Journey of Oneness is unfolding in these areas. We will share our other rich conversations and agenda items from our October meeting in the November 19 issue of *Mercy Now*.

The first area is that of internationality. In conversations with our CCASA Community Leadership Team (CLT), we are learning that many times our conversations and planning focus very strongly on issues pertinent to the United States. We are growing in awareness that each country in our Institute has very specific realities, and all realities must be honored. Our facilitator, Marisa Guerin, provided a consultation to us regarding internationality, stating: "I would like to suggest that your Journey of Oneness is likely to mean greater integration of U.S. communities and a corresponding greater differentiation of off-shore and international communities, all in the name of one unified Institute of Mercy." Future planning and discussions will be necessary as we integrate these new awarenesses and learnings.

The second area relates to what we might call the functions of life and mission that support our everyday lives and commitments (for example, communications, justice, new membership, finances and technology). We are thinking about how each function can serve the whole in an integrated fashion. For example, many newer members as well as incorporation and vocation ministers believe there is a strong readiness for the new membership function to be viewed more from the perspective of the whole. Another timely example is that of the implementation of our Mercy education system for secondary and elementary sponsored schools, in which we are decisively focusing our energy toward one governance design to sustain our schools and mission into the future. Each function brings its own challenges and opportunities that we need to consider.

The third area relates to the structures and processes that sisters use to engage and give direction to the life and mission of our Institute—for example, Mercy Circles, consultation groups, etc. Each CLT shared how each Community provides for participative governance and what leaders have learned in the past years that is enhancing their processes and structures. Future conversations with you as members will also be vital to create the best processes for our future.

The fourth area is that of moving to a phased transition of leadership with significant markers in 2019, 2021 and 2023. We want to share with you how we envision that transition, which will conclude with the Institute Chapter of 2023:

- Phase 1 (2017-2019): The *transition to a single yet-to-be envisioned Institute Leadership Team (ILT)* would occur in 2019. This means the Institute Chapter of 2017 would elect an ILT for a six-year term, as already scheduled. However, the roles, responsibilities and authorities of that ILT will change July 1, 2019.
- The Communities will continue to elect their Community Leadership Teams through July 1, 2019. In 2019, these same CLTs would be appointed by the Institute Leadership Team and would continue to serve till June 30, 2021. Additionally, their roles, responsibilities and authorities begin to shift in 2019.
- Phase 2 (2019-2021): Future CLTs (or what we name their successor roles) will all be appointed. We will develop a careful process of

consultation with members to help determine next steps regarding future needs.

- Phase 3 (2023 and beyond): Our phases are complete. The Institute Chapter will review this work and recommend needed changes to our *Constitutions*.

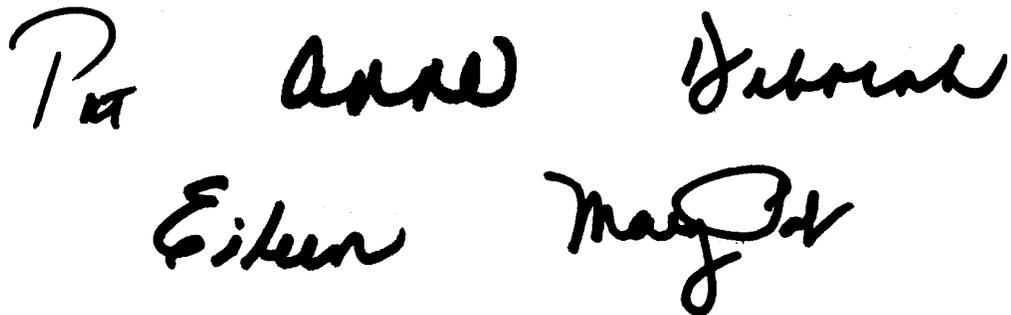
Once you have had an opportunity to reflect upon this timeline, we want to create conversations with you to identify the implications of this direction. More importantly, we want together to name the values that will guide us as we make this journey. The process will most immediately impact sisters in the Mid-Atlantic, NyPPaW and South Central Communities, who will hold elections in 2016. These three Communities will elect their leaders in ways that are familiar to them and according to their current governance plans, but they will also need to consider that those leaders will shift from serving as “elected” leaders to “appointed” leaders in 2019. What seems very important is that we deepen our understanding that all sisters being elected to roles in CLTs are in service as leaders for our Institute—the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

The accompanying presentation (bit.ly/JourneyofOnenessVideo_1152015) will graphically assist all of us to see the paths we are considering as we begin to offer one another our best guidance on this journey. In addition, the Institute Chapter Planning Team and a newly formed Institute Governance Work Group will focus their attention on the exploration and integration of this direction while seeking careful consultation and engagement with you, our sisters. In all of these

endeavors, we will ensure effective communication so that each of our voices, as members and leaders, are being offered, respected and integrated into a path forward that holds integrity.

We hope you will recognize in these directions that the Institute Leadership Conference is gaining clarity about what is emerging for our Institute regarding eventual changes in our governance structures. Simultaneously, all of us in Mercy are engaged in an Institute-wide process through December, which invites us to probe the real treasures of our Journey of Oneness in preparation for Chapter 2017. How we are and will be transformed more deeply into the very mercy of God for our world is our deepest desire as Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Let us pray for one another that all of our efforts and prayers for transformation may be deepened as we make this journey together.

In mercy,



Pat Anne Deborah
Eileen Margaret

The Institute Leadership Team on behalf of the Institute Leadership Conference