



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 Racism



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: Literature has often spoken of dreams. Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently shared his dream in his famous speech at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963; Langston Hughes in his poem, “A Dream Deferred” asks what happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up or does it explode? A segregated educational system left many desiring a quality education but their dreams were deferred. Even when schools gradually became desegregated, inequalities were still glaring. The young, who held dreams of an education in a system free of racial slurs and taunts where they did not have to fear for her life, still had an unrealized dream as they were met with hatred.

Most of us will never have to face the humiliating situations and staggering injustices borne by our sisters and brothers of color. And let us not think that this is a thing of the past. Racism today often expresses itself in more subtle ways that are just as insidious.

Sisters of Mercy share many dreams about our future together. One such dream is our desire to address “the unrecognized and unreconciled racism” present in our own systems and structures. If we are serious about this challenge then we must work to make this dream a reality. We are called to examine our own prejudices and discriminatory actions but our task is much deeper. We must look seriously at our own institutional racism and acknowledge our own complicity both individually and communally in oppressive systems and structures.

The dream cannot be deferred any longer. The injustice cannot continue. Holding each other in compassion and prayer we move forward on our journey together.

Reflection: Have you ever had to defer a dream? What did it feel like to experience? Was there fear connected to this experience in any way?

Have you ever been the object of hatred, prejudice or discrimination? What were the circumstances and how did you respond?

Sharing: Each one is invited to share his/her reflections on racism.

Be conscious of not just looking at personal prejudice and discrimination. Delve deeper into the institutional racism which affects us all.

Look at ways in which you may be benefiting from this structure at the expense of people of color.

Possible Actions:

Read and study to better understand the difference between prejudice or discrimination and racism.

If you are a Sister of Mercy or Mercy Associate, attend a racism workshop offered by the Institute Anti-Racism Transformation Team.

Be aware of stereotypes and work against being influenced by them.

Be conscious of ways in which people of color are presented in the media. If the depiction is unfavorable, consider contacting the TV station, the advertiser or the company responsible to register your disfavor.

Do not engage in racist jokes or stories. If you are present when this occurs, try addressing it in a way that does not escalate conflict but that speaks to your personal experience which may differ from that of those sharing the story. Be careful not to make a judgment or say anything dismissive of the person telling the story.

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