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# Awakening to a New Consciousness

*Listening to the Cry of Earth  
and the Cry of the Poor*

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Mercy's Theological Reflection Process



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## The Call to a New Consciousness

### Chapter 2017 Recommitment

In 2017 in Buffalo, New York, the Sixth Institute Chapter gathered to discuss how we could transform ourselves toward greater integrity of word and deed. We affirmed the various ways in which we could strengthen our relationships with one another. And we challenged ourselves to embrace our Critical Concerns more fully using the lens of nonviolence. Finally, we recommitted ourselves to hear and to respond to the cries of Earth and the cries of the poor.

*“We hear the call of our suffering world. The impoverishment of peoples, the devastation of Earth and oppressive social norms and systems call us at this moment to act...To intensify our efforts to align our investments with our values and, especially now, to pursue education and action against practices of extractive industries that are destroying people, communities and Earth.”*

— *Chapter 2017 Recommitment Statement*

This theological reflection process is a response to the Chapter identification of a critical issue known as extractivism. Extractivism refers to the process of extracting raw materials (minerals, metals, oil, gas and coal) from Earth in such a way that it irreparably destroys vital ecosystems, land and water, and severely impacts air quality. The effects include

- **devastating communities and cultures,**
- **displacing people from their homes and land, often through force or coercion,**
- **and escalating public health crises with new diseases and illnesses.**

These effects deepen the suffering of people who are impoverished and vulnerable. Extractive industries typically manipulate their way into these communities with promises of jobs and a better life.

In the process that follows, we seek to understand more deeply how extractivism impacts the whole community of life, including vital ecosystems and the communities that live in these ecosystems. We seek to understand how we are complicit in destroying these ecosystems through our systemic, individual and communal actions. As stated in our Chapter 2017 Recommitment, we are called to act against the oppressive social norms and systems that lead to the destruction of Earth and the impoverishment of peoples. The critical issue of extractivism challenges us more than ever to have a deeper conversation about our values. We seek to align our investments with our values. This requires an in-depth conversation about our values, the process of how and in what we invest, and about how our investments speak to our values.

Compelled by God's call to a new consciousness, we as Sisters of Mercy are moved to claim more deeply our interrelatedness within a community of life. We seek to respond in concrete ways to our ecological crisis. In particular, we are drawn to understand how extractivism impacts all of us, including the most vulnerable among us. We are most especially called to listen deeply to how extractivism impacts the land, air and water of communities of color and indigenous peoples. We are called and challenged to explore the oppressive systems that enable extractivism and how our habitual ways of thinking and acting contribute to the practice of extractivism. We are further compelled to engage our prophetic corporate voice on the question: *Where do we choose to stand together as a unified whole on the critical issue of extractivism?*