

Imaging Mercy Today

Mercy Global Action - moving the planet

Ngā mihi atawhai - greetings to all in mercy! Mercy Global Concern was established at the United Nations headquarters in New York in 1998 by the Sisters of Mercy, as a way of extending their voice for the less privileged. Within the one forum on Earth where all nations have the potential to meet as equals, Sisters of Mercy have been working to make explicit options on behalf of the world's poor.

In recent months, with a strategic plan endorsed by Mercy International Association, the UN centre has been renamed Mercy Global Action, charged with developing a programme based on grassroots efforts by Mercy Sisters and their co-workers around the world.

Two issues have emerged as priorities for Mercy International this year; they are Trafficking/Prostitution and Cosmology/Environment. Working groups have been established to ensure progress and to report to an overall network of Mercy Global Action from Mercy Congregations worldwide. A theological reflection group has also been formed for both topics, to see that the Global Action programme has a soundly theological underpinning.

On the trafficking issue, the UN has already adopted the Palermo Protocol aimed at preventing human trafficking, especially of women and children. The Mercy working group will aim to see that this protocol is ratified and implemented in each of the countries where Mercy works. Many

of us may doubt that human trafficking is a major concern in this country, but one estimate is that up to 200 girls under the age of 18 are currently caught up in New Zealand's sex industry, and predictions are that young women will be at increased risk of sexual violation as large numbers of male tourists gather for World Cup Rugby from next month.

The working groups aim to see that Mercy efforts at the grassroots are reflected in initiatives taken both at the level of national governments and at the UN. In relation to the Cosmology/Environment issue, the working group is preparing policy positions and advocacy which will go to the UN's Earth Summit on sustainable development next year.



SISTER of Mercy Rosemary Revell (right) with staff from Te Waipuna Puawai, work to clean up a polluted stream in Glen Innes, as part of an Earth Day project in their community. Mercy Global Action has named cosmology/environment as a top priority for 2011.

Whole lives on a whole planet

Io Nui, Kaihanga o nga mea katoa,
Great God, Creator of all that lives:
We see your goodness in the whole of creation,
and your Spirit shines in our care for all life.
Let Mercy people everywhere be known as
kaitiaki, guardians of Earth's fragile resources,
committed to plans of action that reduce our
footprint on te whenua now and in future times.

With another Mercy Day in sight,
may we join with others who share our vision
of a planet revered and restored.
By working alongside them, may we help them
to see that the cause is a sacred one, and
that building a new Earth helps your kingdom
of justice and plenty to come for all that lives,
especially where creation is most at risk.

We pray for women and children who are abused;
in a world where too often they are exploited,
may Mercy work to establish a space
where they are free to prosper as they choose.
May the men in our lives learn to channel strength
to see that life at its most vulnerable is enhanced.
Send forth your Spirit of mercy through us,
and renew the face of our Earth. Amen.

In the weeks ahead, Mercy Global Action will roll out an environmental campaign in preparation for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro next June. We'll be asked to say what we are already doing to care for the environment and to reduce global emissions. Already, local Mercy projects like *Papatuanuku Ki Taurangi*, the permaculture garden in Ellerslie, have featured on Mercy's international website. New Zealanders Katrina Fabish rsm, from our Congregation's leadership team, and Bridget Crisp rsm are both actively involved in MGA's cosmology/environment working group.

It may just be serendipitous, but Mercy Day (September 24) coincides this year with Moving Planet, an international effort on behalf of Earth's climate, aimed at moving us all beyond our dependence on fossil fuels (see www.moving-planet.org). The call is to sponsor or join an event, going by bike or skate-board if not on foot, to show our political and civic leaders that we want real solutions to the climate crisis. With almost a couple of months to go, what shall we do, to draw Mercy into this global initiative? The better the day, the better the deed, for sure! - Dennis Horton