Mercy International Association

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

During our MGA team meeting following the death of Pope Francis, we reflected on the impact his papacy had had on each one of us and the world.



REMBERING

Pope Francis

December 17, 1936 - April 21, 2025

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What stood out most in our conversation was the deep sense of unity and encouragement Pope Francis inspired in our mission—especially in our work with and for those on the margins of society. His example of humility and Gospel-centered simplicity reminded us what it means to live a holy and purposeful life. His particular focus on Mercy was especially meaningful to all of us in the Mercy community.

Pope Francis had a unique ability to reach across faith traditions, appealing to people of many religions and worldviews with his compassion, wisdom, and commitment to justice. His openness and inclusivity created space for all—welcoming everyone into dialogue and shared purpose, regardless of background or belief.

Some of us fondly recalled hosting a “Pope Party” at the MGA office in 2015, when Pope Francis addressed the United Nations General Assembly. A strong and lasting memory from that day was watching his small Fiat travel down First Avenue—going in what would normally be the wrong direction—on his way to the UN Headquarters. This image spoke powerfully to us of the revolutionary way Pope Francis approached his ministry: humbly, counter-culturally, and with bold conviction. Those of us who couldn't be at the UN watched his speech together on a big screen in the office, filled with pride and inspiration.

We also reminisced about the day Laudato Si' was released. Reading it, we felt deeply affirmed in our environmental advocacy, particularly around issues like the degradation of the Earth. At the time, the MGA office was actively engaged in the negotiations for the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals—especially advocating for recognition of the human right to water. Pope Francis's encyclical gave us renewed energy and conviction to continue our work for water justice.

His later encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, offered another strong affirmation of the ministry of advocacy. It reminded us of the deep connection between the Gospel and the call to solidarity with those who are rendered poor or marginalized.

Over the years, many involved in Mercy ministry were fortunate to meet Pope Francis in person. Srs Angela Reed and Denise Coghlan were especially blessed to encounter him at a Vatican conference where they discussed the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking—a cause close to his heart and central to our own mission.

All of us agreed that Pope Francis not only inspired us, but reinvigorated our work. His legacy of mercy, justice, humility, and radical love will continue to guide and challenge us in the years ahead.

We will all miss Pope Francis.



Sr Angela Reed had the privilege of meeting Pope Francis at a Vatican Conference in which the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking were explored.





The MGA team and friends watched from the MGA office as Pope Francis arrived at the UN in his little black Fiat!

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At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- ***Marietta Latonio Reflects on her experience at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII)***

As a mercy delegate to the twenty-fourth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I had the liberty to attend some challenging events. I offer here my reflections: One event was entitled 'Violation of Human Rights to water in the Amazon: Impacts on people, environment and implementation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP).'' Another was entitled, "Global Dialogue: Opportunities to share, opportunities and challenges".

The problem of contamination of water and soil is a big issue globally, as extractive companies continuously use destructive substances in their mining activities. The presence of mercury in the human system due to extractivism is high.

In the Amazon region, many Indigenous people (IP) are affected by this issue and it is significantly impacting pregnant women, endangering their unborn babies. Soil contamination is also a concern for many IP's, as farmers are using strong fertilizers in the hope of gaining good produce. However, these farming practices have greatly contributed to the contamination of water. IP's report that often the poison runoff is drained into rivers and other sources of freshwater. In the Indigenous areas, water is sacred, and it is life.

The cry of the Earth is the cry of the Indigenous People.

Reflection Continues on the Next Page







At the United Nations

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Scarcity of water happens as a result of contamination. IP's have nowhere to go for fresh water. Many areas in the Amazon are drying up. The absence of water has caused IP's to voluntarily migrate to other places. In addition to the water use by the Indigenous Peoples themselves, it also sustains the water needs of the people in the urban areas, as in the case of Brazil, water is provided to at least 48% of their urban population. Moreover, privatization of water is hurting the IP's in such a way that they are faced with increasing competition for their scarce water reserves from bottled water companies.

Deforestation and cutting of trees illegally is another problem faced by the IPs as it diminishes and has negative impacts on their land. It causes soil erosion and loss of biodiversity in their natural habitat. In the case of West Papua, deforestation is caused by commercialized palm and or sugar cane plantations. An outcome of this is that Indigenous Peoples face challenges in maintaining their traditional livelihoods and local food sources.

Militarization is another problem that some IP communities are facing. Once again anexample was provided by a West Papuan representative during the forum. Thousands of Indigenous Papuans have been displaced from their own homes due to conflict and militarization.

In South Sudan, constant marginalization, internal conflict, contamination of water and soil and deforestation have provided many challenges and grief for Indigenous people Internal conflict within their regions is usually over resources like land and water. Additionally, reduced farming due to conflict, has exacerbated food insecurity thus, many South Sudanese are suffering from famine and inadequate food supply.

In Guatemala, mining is a big problem because extractive companies can easily obtain the documents to operate large scale operations. Protests and opposition to mining activities have been initiated by some IP groups citing violation of their rights to free, prior and informed consent.

Reflection Continues on the Next Page



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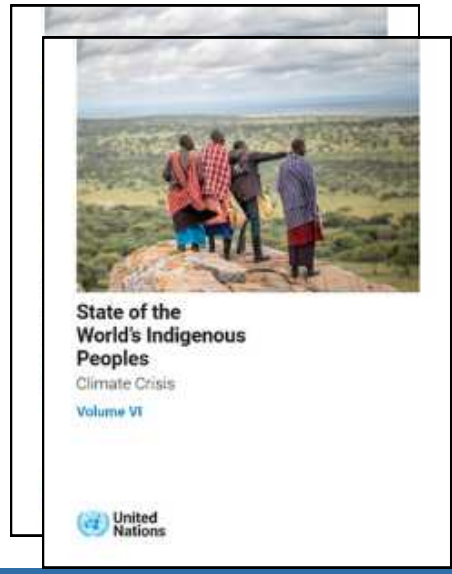
In India, some NGOs and religious groups experienced difficulty in helping the Indigenous People because some of the states had issued a law on "Anti-conversion." This law prohibits members of religious groups from communicating with Indigenous people on the grounds of protecting them from religious conversion! This is merely a political strategy to silence the Indigenous People and take away their rights.

At the end of the session, a Columban priest from Peru reiterated the word HOPE in the discussion. He emphasized that the late Pope Francis proclaimed the Jubilee Year emphasizing the importance of hope. There is hope because there are still groups of people who gather and talk about the issue and ways to solve it. That includes us. We must continue the conversation until the issue of Extractivism is lessened if not eradicated.

Marietta Latonio

- ***The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report***

The United Nations launched "The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report," exposing sharp disparities within the fight against climate change. The report notes that, although Indigenous peoples make up only 6 percent of the global population and protect 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity, they receive less than 1 percent of international climate funding.



This report and the recent PFII emphasize the importance of listening and uplifting Indigenous voices as they are on the frontlines of the climate fight. To read the report, click **here**.

MELF TAKEOVER



Elizabeth (Libby) Blom (Australia)



MELF Cohort 4 in Cambodia



MELF Cohort 4 in Cambodia

Libby Blom attended keynote sessions presented by Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM at the Mercy Mission Formation Network meeting in Queensland, Australia. Professor Susan Pascoe keynotes were entitled: (1) "Cast the Net - The conversion of Processes" and (2) "Implementing the Synod of Synodality in Mercy Ministries." The following is her reflection:

"**We are the Church we are waiting for**

On the very day, Thursday 8 May, as Susan shared her experience of the Synod on Synodality with the Mercy people gathered, a historic moment was unfolding within the Conclave. The announcement of Pope Leo XIV as the successor to Pope Francis was soon to be made. The timing felt providential, with great hope that this was not an ending but a continuation of a movement that Pope Francis had fiercely championed. In his final reflection to the Synod assembly, he urged:

'This is the Church we are called to "dream": a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters; a Church that never demands an attestation of "good behaviour" but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives; a Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy.'

All Images: MGA

MELF TAKEOVER (CONTINUED)

Susan's presentation carried this dream into our midst, not as an abstract hope but as a living, breathing reality already stirring across Catholic life in Australia and beyond. Her words reminded us that synodality is not a temporary project or a Vatican initiative. It is a way of being Church that is rooted in our baptism, practised in community, sustained by grace and actioned through mercy.The conversation that followed Susan's presentation echoed this deep truth. Many attendees spoke of both frustration and faithful commitment. They named the pain of exclusion from sacramental roles, the slow unravelling of parish communities and the fear that the synodal journey might stall with leadership transitions both locally and globally. Yet in the same breath came a bold recognition that we are not powerless. In our Mercy schools, aged care facilities, health ministries, social services and lay-led initiatives, the Spirit is alive and active.

Pope Francis, in the Synod's final report, had called for all baptised Catholics to shape the future Church. We are called not in defiance but in fidelity, fidelity to the God who calls us to live and lead from our baptismal identity. As Pope Francis said, "baptism is our ID card," a permanent authorisation to listen, speak, discern and accompany.

Susan shared the recognition that in places like Papua New Guinea, this call had already taken deep root explaining, "In PNG, they just went with it. They knew they were the Church and they lived it." Susan's grounded examples invited our own reflection: what might it mean for us to live it too, with courage and conviction?

Pope Francis had reminded us that while "synodality is an expression of the Church's nature, her form, style and mission," the Church in our day often lacks the habit and practice of synodality. We must ask ourselves:

Are we listening?
Are we discerning?
Is this good judgment?
Is this allowing each person to become their best self?

All Images: MGA

MELF TAKEOVER (CONTINUED)

These questions (and many others) are not just for a moment, they are for a lifetime. While there may be fear that the work will be undone, it was evident in our gathering that what lives in us as people of Mercy cannot be undone. The Spirit that animates synodality is not confined to one era or leader, it is alive wherever people gather to listen, discern and act with compassion.

With the death of Pope Francis, the synodal dream he championed now passes into new hands - not only papal ones. It lives in Mercy people and in Catholic communities and ministries who dare to believe that the Gospel is alive, that the Church is changing and that we are co-creators in its unfolding. In Mercy, we find the courage to lead, to love and to walk with others in hope.

In his first message as the Successor of Peter, Pope Leo XIV expressed his hope for the future of the Church:

'Together, we must look for ways to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges and encourages dialogue, a Church ever open to welcoming ... all those who are in need of our charity, our presence, our readiness to dialogue and our love.'

As we embrace this call, may we, as pilgrims of hope in this Jubilee Year, commit ourselves to living out this vision with courage and compassion. As people of Mercy, let us help shape a Church that welcomes without condition, serves with humility, and leads with love. May we walk this synodal path not as strangers but as companions - faithful to the Gospel, open to the Spirit, and becoming, together, the Church we are called to dream: a haven of mercy with open doors, a servant of all and a witness to hope in our time."

Blessings,

Libby

All Images: MGA

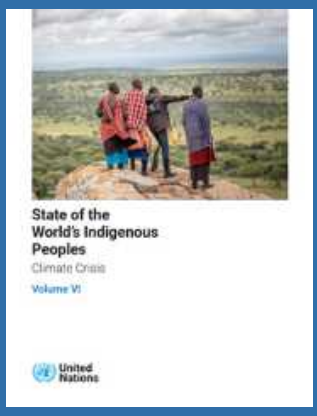
USEFUL RESOURCES:



Indigenous Rights Are Vital to a Healthy and Just World - WECAN



The International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) Website



State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report



Image: Canva licence

UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL COMMEMORATIONS

- June 1: Global Day of Parents
- June 4: International Day of Innocent Children Against Victims of Aggression
- June 5: World Environment Day
- June 5: International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
- June 8: World Oceans Day
- June 12: World Day Against Child Labour
- June 14: World Blood Donor Day (WHO)
- June 16: International Day of Family Remittances
- June 17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- June 18: International Day for Countering Hate Speech
- June 19: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- June 20: World Refugee Day

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