

Acknowledgments

Cycling with Sisters Planning Team — South Bend Ride 2020

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Prayer Guide

for a Pedaling Pilgrimage

*Promoting the social justice work
of Catholic Sisters and Collaborators*

Prayer #1: We pray for a spirit of hope and resilience in responding to the issues of our time.

Introduction

Where were you nineteen years ago today? We can all remember where we were when we heard the news that changed our lives forever in previously unimaginable ways. The shocking attacks on September 11, 2001 resulted in many deaths and a fear that has led to an endless war on terrorism. The attacks also resulted in countless stories of bravery, sacrifice, generosity and solidarity.

Likewise, today and throughout 2020, the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed our lives again. Widespread fear and blame are ever-present, but so are stories of selfless service, hope and resilience.

As we ride today we pray in remembrance of those who have lost their lives as a result of the 9/11 attacks and COVID-19. May they rest in God's eternal peace. We also pray for those who are affected by the coronavirus today, and for their families and loved ones who share their suffering.

And as we ride today, we pray that we can share the hope, resilience and peace that comes from a deep belief in Jesus, who often greeted his friends and followers by saying "Peace be with you" – and who promised to be with us always. Confident that God hears our prayers and is with us as we respond to the issues and needs of our times, in solidarity with our sisters and brothers throughout the world, we begin our ride today.

Work of Women Religious and Collaborators

Women religious and collaborators pray daily for all whose lives are affected by the pandemic and for those who have died. In care and solidarity, we wear masks and maintain social distancing. And we share our resources, as we are able, to try to alleviate the suffering of God's most vulnerable people, our beloved sisters and brothers.

- The **Congregation of St. Joseph** donated \$10,000 to the parish of Gichitwaa Kateri in Minneapolis which serves the Native American Community. The Native peoples are struggling with homelessness, opioid addiction, missing and murdered Indigenous women and other poverty-related issues that make them vulnerable to COVID-19.

- The **Sisters of St. Casimir in Chicago** donated needed funds to St. Rita Parish to help provide food for the Hispanic families in the neighborhood who have suffered from the loss of their jobs and to Catholic Charities who share their facilities to respond to the increasing number of people in need in their area. The sisters' long-term presence in a very diverse, economically deprived area of the city continues to help them "walk the talk" of peace and justice among their neighbors of all backgrounds and stand with others in addressing the unconscious racism in our society and individuals.
- The **Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton, Iowa**, passed on their Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks) to assist those more impacted by COVID-19 than they have been. Donations were made to ten non-profit organizations in Iowa, Illinois, New Mexico, and South Dakota.

Silent Reflection

We pause to remember those who suffer this day from the coronavirus and from fear and loneliness, and all who are in need of hope, strength and the peace of Christ this day.

Prayer for a Pandemic

by Joan Chittister, OSB

God of light and God of mystery, give us the faith to see you in the grey dimness of our time.

Give us the heart to hear, in the silence of the sick, the call to care for those in pain.

Give us the courage to find you where you do not now appear to be.

Give us the trust it takes to make our way through this uncertainty, this fear, this seemingly irredeemable sense of limitless loss to the recognition of the relentless hope that each seasonal cycle of life confirms in us.

You who made all things for our good and our growth, show us, too, now the power of darkness so that we might see newly—beyond the ephemeral – to what are really the gloriously important things in life. Amen.

Mantra

Our mantra as we ride and for you as you pray with us:

**Open wide my arms
that the suffering of the world
may come in.**

Prayer #2: We pray for an end to human trafficking.

Introduction

“Each year thousands of innocent men, women and children are victims of exploitative labor and sexual abuse, and of organ trafficking. It seems that we have become so accustomed to this, as to consider it a normal thing. This is deplorable; it is cruel; it is criminal! I wish to remind everyone of the duty to combat this abhorrent plague, a form of modern slavery.” — Pope Francis, *Angelus*, July 30, 2017

Work of Women Religious and Collaborators

In September 2019, Pope Francis spoke to sister-members of Talitha Kum, the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons. He said: “I congratulate you on the important work you are doing... Your work brings together the missions of different institutions and demands cooperation between them. You have chosen to be on the front lines. This is a model of how to work together. It is an example for the whole Church, and also for us: men, priests, bishops ...You are giving a great example – keep at it!” He ended his remarks by reminding the sisters: “Never end the day without thinking about the gaze of one of the victims you have known: this will be a beautiful prayer.”

- **U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking**, the U.S. member of Talitha Kum, is a national network of over 110 congregations of women religious that offers education, supports access to survivor services and engages in advocacy to eradicate modern-day slavery.
- **LifeWay Network**, supported by **37 congregations in the Tri-State Area**, provides safe housing for women who have been trafficked and offers education about trafficking to the general public.
- The **Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center in Seattle, sponsored by 22 congregations**, holds monthly public anti-trafficking prayer vigils in seven different locations in Washington, Oregon and California.

Silent Reflection

We pause to remember the victims and survivors of human trafficking, and all those who work to restore their dignity and freedom.

A Prayer for the End of Human Trafficking

by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, NJ

*God of freedom, beauty and truth,
we believe that your deepest desire,
is that all creation might know abundant life.
We raise our voices in anguished prayer
for our sisters and brothers,
women and girls, men and boys,
who are modern-day slaves.
They are your beloved daughters and sons,
exploited sexually or forced to work
because of human violence and greed.
Fill us with your holy anger and your sacred passion
that those who are trafficked might know healing and justice;
that traffickers will come to repentance and conversion;
that all of us might live in such a way
that others are not made to pay the price
for our comfort and convenience.
Hasten the coming of the day when all people
and our precious Earth itself will be treated, not as a commodity,
but as radiant images of your freedom, beauty and truth.
Amen. May it be so.*

Mantra

Our mantra as we ride and for you as you pray with us:

**Open wide my arms
that the suffering of the world
may come in.**

Prayer #3: We pray to end racism and hate.

Introduction

“My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form, and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.” — Pope Francis, June 3, 2020

“As women religious we acknowledge our own complicity in institutional racism; we ask forgiveness of our sisters and brothers of color; we pray for our nation’s healing, and we know that is not enough. It is time for bold, decisive action. We pledge to raise our voices and to act now to end this scourge which has cost us so dearly.”

— Leadership Conference of Women Religious, May 30, 2020

Work of Women Religious and Collaborators

Racism is a tragic part of our history in our country, in our church, and in religious life. Women’s religious congregations are acknowledging and apologizing for this history of racism, and are moving toward reconciliation by doing both the inner and intentional work required to welcome and value greater diversity in religious life and in society.

- The **Springfield Dominican Sisters** invited people of color from Springfield and their sponsored ministries around the country to form the Springfield Dominican Anti-Racism Team, made up of 20 sisters and 20 laypeople of color. They review the order’s policies and procedures to identify and interrupt racism that may be at work.
- The **Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky**, who owned 30 people at Emancipation, were among the first sisters to seek to make amends. They joined with two other orders — the **Dominicans of Saint Catharine** and the **Sisters of Loretto** — to host a prayer service in 2000 where they formally apologized for their slaveholding. In 2012, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth erected a monument at a cemetery where many of the enslaved people were buried.

- The **School Sisters of Notre Dame** made racial justice a priority commitment through their 2020 Summer of Solidarity Initiative. For seven weeks, the SSND sisters, associates and ministry partners engaged in an online process of education and reflection, to assist people of faith to effectively address racism personally and corporately.

Silent Reflection

We pause to remember in prayer the victims of racial violence, discrimination, hate crimes and systemic racism. We remember their families and loved ones who suffer with them and all of us who are scarred by a culture of racism and violence.

A Prayer for Racial Healing

by OSP IHM Healing Racism Committee

Loving God,
we desire to embrace the dignity
of each human person as revealed
by the mystery of the Incarnation.
Help us to live our commitment to undo racism.
Empower us to participate in the process of
right relationships, healing and reconciliation.
Strengthen us in our resolve to eradicate racism
within ourselves, our congregations, our Church
and our global community.
We offer this prayer in a spirit of trust
and hope in your providence. Amen.

Mantra

Our mantra as we ride and for you as you pray with us:

Open wide my arms
that the suffering of the world
may come in.

Prayer #4: We pray in solidarity with our Earth and all of God's creation.

Introduction

"The ecological crisis that is facing us today requires many things to change, but it is we humans above all who need to change."

"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

— Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #202, #217

Work of Women Religious and Collaborators

For many years, we as women religious have been reflecting on the interconnectedness of all creation, and educating ourselves and others about the integrity of creation and ecological sustainability. Also, we are cleaning rivers and lakes, insisting that clean air standards be maintained and improved, and working to reverse the life-threatening effects of climate change. We reverence and protect our Common Home and have put our human and financial resources to work for the good of the planet and God's people.

- **Sixteen U.S. congregations of Dominican Sisters** have pooled more than \$46 million to establish the Climate Solutions Fund, a new investment funds initiative aimed at financing solutions to address climate change and assist communities worldwide most at risk.
- DTE Energy and the **Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, MI**, dedicated a 518-kilowatt solar energy system at their Motherhouse property. The \$2.6 million solar energy system, with more than 2,000 photovoltaic modules, covers three acres and connects directly with the DTE Energy electric grid. It has the capacity to power nearly 70 homes.
- Since their founding in 1916, the **Sylvania Franciscan Sisters in Ohio** have built and maintained a place of great natural and artistic/architectural beauty out of concern and reverence for humans and Mother Earth. Buildings (windows, lighting, heating and cooling

systems) have been updated to be more energy efficient and Sisters, students and local citizens are informed through regular lecture series and social media.

Silent Reflection

We pause to remember the earth and those who suffer when earth suffers, especially those who are poor. We continue to remember people around the globe who directly suffer the effects of climate change in extreme weather situations, unbreathable air, and earthquakes.

A Prayer for Our Earth

by Pope Francis

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with tenderness all that exists. Pour out on us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and of the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, and to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey toward your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.

Mantra

Our mantra as we ride and for you as you pray with us:

**Open wide my arms
that the suffering of the world
may come in.**

Prayer #5: We pray for immigration reform and in support of immigrants.

Introduction

Three basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration are: (1) People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families (2) A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration, and (3) A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy. Women religious believe and teach Catholic social tradition based on the human dignity of all persons and that includes the biblical mandate of welcoming the stranger. Both the Old and New Testaments relate stories of refugees forced to flee their homes because of oppression while assuring them that God is with them. Jesus calls us to love and care for the stranger, telling us: “For I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Work of Women Religious and Collaborators

Many communities of women religious were founded by immigrants or to serve immigrant communities. Today, sisters and collaborators continue to welcome immigrants and refugees, publicly calling for immigration reform and supporting immigrants already living among us including migrant farm workers, Dreamers, those seeking asylum, and others. Our communities sponsor immigrant and refugee resettlement centers and provide language classes, job training and other necessary services.

- The **Sisters of the Holy Cross** support and staff *Casanicolas* at the U.S./ Mexico border, in Guadalupe, Nuevo León, Mexico. *Casanicolas* provides migrants with shelter in a secure place, food and pastoral care. The sisters and staff at *Casanicolas* work to promote human rights and build communities of justice and love.
- In San Antonio, Texas, the **Sisters of Divine Providence** help with displaced immigrants, provide transportation to reunite them with family members, and visit those incarcerated in camps.
- In 2018-2019, in response to the needs of unaccompanied minors and thousands of immigrants, **hundreds of women religious** from several congregations throughout the U.S. joined with the staff at **Annunciation**

House in El Paso to welcome refugees and respond to their needs. Congregations in the U.S. also offered generous financial support to those in need at the southern border. The sisters and collaborators who participated in this effort were deeply touched by the courage and resilience of our immigrant sisters and brothers.

Silent Reflection

We pause to remember our sisters and brothers from all countries, especially those who are refugees, displaced and persecuted. May they find welcome and a home where their families can live in safety and prosper.

A Prayer for Immigration Reform

from the Sisters of the Holy Names Spiritual Ministries Network

Mary our Mother, together with Joseph and the Child Jesus, you experienced the suffering of exile. You were forced to flee to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod. Today, we entrust the men, women and children who live as migrants, undocumented immigrants and refugees to your maternal protection.

We ask for the grace to welcome them with Christian hospitality, so that these brothers and sisters of ours may find acceptance and understanding on their journey. Teach us to recognize your Son...

- *in the migrant worker who labors to bring food to our tables and whose human rights are often not respected.*
- *in the refugee seeking protection from persecution.*
- *in the asylum seeker imprisoned for fleeing without documents.*

May all those who are far from their place of birth find in us a place where no one is a stranger. We ask this in the name of your blessed Son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Mantra

Our mantra as we conclude our ride, praying together for our world:

**Open wide my arms
that the suffering of the world
may come in.**