



Encountering Grace

Medical Mission Sisters

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Love in a time of Covid and UP-rising

So much conspires to shake and shatter us
in this present 2020 TENSE:
Our imperfect nation brought to its knees
by a malign chip of DNA
seeking hosts in which to replicate:
widening suffering, whispering death (alone).
Our imperfect Union echoing I Can't Breathe in every city and
hamlet:
cries for healing from 400 years' deferred be-longing
for black and brown sisters and brothers.
Deferred freedom, dignity, justice, respect.
LIFE!
MMS Community prizes and daily deploys
practice in how-to-be-a-change-agent –
experience
grounding
resilience
meditation & mindfulness
ministries
vision that employs the arts
ritual and writing
muscle memory in non-violence:

A spirituality for such a time as this.
Our MMS homing-instinct
DNA-deep is that
the world and its peoples are one.
Our works of healing
-- a lens widened through 95 years –

MEND

a breach, a wound, an injustice
an impasse,
sorrows around the block and around the world.

We heal toward erasure of each obstacle
that imperils fullness of all created life!
Doctor Anna Dengel's founding vision
engaged the works of Justice (read Love),
with each MMS healing gesture, teaching,
trekking on six continents.
With characteristic high energy Anna would say,
"If you LOVE, you are interested,"
you ask, listen and seek to learn.
Yes! And so,

Thanks to our quieting-in-place to outwit Covid,
in my 81st year I continue
life-long learning, reading, writing on issues of
environmental racism, mass incarceration,
white privilege, systemic racism.

Loretta Whalen, Associate

A VISION OF HEALING

We are living with paradox. In a time
of planetary upheaval: earthquakes, fires,
tsunamis, hurricanes; in society protests, wars,
polarization of politics; neofascism; increase in
addiction, levels of poverty, numbers of refugees,
pandemics, wars and yet: *in the ordinariness of
the day to day we carry on!*

We are in the midst of two pandemics, one
very new and one millennia old. The first,
covid-19, has brought the world to its knees
with a microscopic virus whose sole goal is to
infect humans – anyone, everyone. The second
pandemic, systemic racism, is with humankind
for millennia. The domination of one group over
one another has marked human history in virtually
every culture each with their own story of how
'power over' came to be.

Any vision of healing will include: a language
of healing steps, steps toward reconciliation,
always asking, "What is present here?"

We must learn how to fall, hopefully with
humility and grace, making way for something
new to emerge. Once we transcend the fear and
anguish, even briefly, we have the possibility
of reverently replacing it with a different way
of being. We have a sense that the real world is
clearly damaged and bruised, but when we look
closely, against all evidence, we find something
that transcends and connects. We know there is
healing power in intention, presence and energy.

May we discover God's healing presence
in everything and everyone, and see Oneness
rather than separation. Let us create fields of
compassionate presence and transform with love.

Find A Way To Joy

- **Celebrate the good stuff!**
- **Be hopeful, take inspiration from the young.**
- **Let go of dualities: black/white, straight/gay, us/them.**
- **Be aware of, and acknowledge the divine life in all.**

A NEW WORLD BEGINS

As Sister Maria Hornung stepped forward to receive supplemental groceries after waiting her turn in the long line, her breath caught. A white American-born woman in her 80's, Sister Maria felt her heart open as she prepared to receive large boxes of groceries from a Latina woman from Peru, decades younger than herself. She describes recognizing the power reversal as a sacred moment.

The younger woman happens to be Medical Mission Sister Marisol Martinez who is co-coordinating Philadelphia's distribution of supplemental food - 400 boxes twice a week - in their Kensington neighborhood. Sister Maria was picking up food to give to her neighbors who had no mode of transport and therefore no access to the resource. Although they have a relationship as Sisters, the interaction was no less powerful for Sister Maria.

In a reflection on hospitality a week later, Sister Maria included Sister Agnes Lanfermann's (an MMS from Germany) observations on the story of Jesus joining the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after his crucifixion. Sister Agnes remarked this it is odd that later that day in the home of the disciples, Jesus was the one who broke the bread and offered it to the others. He was not the host; it was not his home, his food. He was the foreigner dependent on their hospitality. But Jesus acts like he belongs, refuses to be the guest, to be on the receiving end – he takes the power and he switches the nature of the relationship. He disrupts the power relations and dynamics; he reverses the power structure, the flow of power in the room and the distribution of power at the table.

Sister Agnes adds that Jesus messed with the rules about who has the resources, who has the power. At the table, when the guest becomes the host, the world changes, the old world falls away and a new world begins.



Sister Maria Hornung (left) took a moment in September to show Sister Marisol Martinez the tomatoes she had planted.

Sister Maria lives in an apartment building for low income Seniors (less than \$2000 in liquid and fixed assets). Sister Marisol had arranged for Sister Maria to pick up five boxes of groceries and drive them back to her neighbors. Sister Maria said it was a little like sharing the loaves and fishes. Because she lives with other seniors, a box of supplemental food would have been too much for one household. Instead they opened the boxes and shared the bags of oranges and potatoes and other items - the food spreading out to feed many more than only five families. Sister Maria adds, "How grateful the residents were!"

Please consider supporting the Medical Mission Sisters who seek to be a healing presence in body, mind and spirit. All over the world Sisters and Associates are serving in clinics and hospitals, schools and community centers, on the streets and in eco-spirituality centers. We seek to provide hope and to be a channel of God's grace.

WAYS TO GIVE

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**“We are not just connected,
we essentially belong
to each other.”**



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Writer / Editor
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SHIFTING POWER

Sister Philo Morris is a brown-skinned immigrant woman volunteering in Philadelphia with immigrants from all over the world. She accompanies refugees, offering social, emotional and spiritual support. She also provides some financial support, acting as a conduit for grants from MMS as well as gifts from established immigrants from her home country of India. In the eyes of the world she has no means, she has no power. However, for the new refugee she has the power of information, security and connections. She shares, “I was deeply touched when two refugees took me out to eat, invited me to their homes for a meal and packed food for me to take home. Their acts of kindness delighted my heart and I am aware at these moments power has shifted from me to them.” A relationship develops and the power dynamic is disrupted.



Above, Sister Philo (center) with a refugee family in 2019.