

1989-2019

# The Works of Mercy and Human Rights

### **OUR VISION**

A global community in which the dignity of  
every person is respected;  
resources are shared equitably;  
the environment is sustained;  
and nations and peoples live in peace.

### **OUR MISSION**

We are a Franciscan voice at the United Nations  
protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten,  
and the wounded earth through advocacy.



## A Reflection on the "Mandala" of Saint Nicolas of Flue



This "Mandala" was created in the 15th Century based on the insights of Saint Nicolas of Flue (1417-1487), who was canonized shortly after the Second World War and proclaimed Patron Saint of Peace.

The images of the mandala are sequenced according to the pleas of the "Our Father." Its structure is that of a wheel which symbolizes the passing of time, and the history of the world and of humanity. God, the Unmoved Mover, is the center of the wheel and at the same time takes part in the different scenes. Through God's action, history of the world becomes that of salvation. However, humans are not just the "objects" of salvation. They take active part in salvation, as "subjects," with their acts of mercy.

Just 70 years ago, after the horrific experiences of the First and Second World Wars, the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the hope that this action would prevent such horrors from ever occurring again.

Mercy and human rights are interdependent. Without the recognition of the rights of humanity, mercy can be humiliating. Without mercy, rights can be loveless. Yet, both are rooted in human dignity which is unconditional and inalienable for each and every human being. When the respect of human rights and works of mercy go hand in hand, then history becomes that of salvation.

This reflection booklet looks beyond the original scenes of the mandala, at sisters and brothers of our time, who work together with Franciscans International to bring mercy and rights together in their Franciscan mission.

Let us now become one with them in prayer so that "God's kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven."



To feed the hungry  
and give water  
to the thirsty

## Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name.

“The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and He placed there the man whom He had formed.

Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, ... A river rises in Eden to water the garden;”

• Genesis 2:7-9a,10a



The right to  
nutritious food  
and clean water

We hallow God’s name when we care for creation and share the fruits of the earth in a just way. Though we produce much more than is needed to feed the present population, one in nine of our sisters and brothers goes to bed hungry. Over three million children die from the consequences of undernutrition and over half a million people die because of a lack of access to safe drinking water.

The lack of access to safe drinking water also claims the lives of hundreds of people attempting to cross the desert lying between the US and Mexico in the hopes of a more decent life.

The picture above shows Brother Sam Nasada from the Province of Saint Barbara writing a message on a jug of water to the people who might find it, which he will carefully place in this desert.

*God, you brought the whole world into existence and created men and women in your image. It is in caring for our common home and respecting the dignity of each one that we become brothers and sisters, and that we become your children. Let us gratefully enjoy the fruits of the earth and share them justly, in Jesus Christ our Brother and Lord. Amen.*





To welcome  
the stranger

### Thy kingdom come.

“And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

• Luke 2:4-7



The right  
to asylum

Nearly 70 million people around the world have been forced to leave their homes. Jesus and his parents found themselves in the same situation. Mary had to give birth to her child in a stable, since they were away from home and there was no room for them. Soon thereafter they had to take refuge in Egypt.

For many years the Franciscans have run a center for migrants and refugees close to Mexico's southern border, caring for the needs of the people and providing them with legal assistance. Most of them have left their homes to flee violence in the hope of a more decent life. However, during their journey, and once arrived at their country of destination, they again face violence and exploitation.

*God, countless people share the fate of Jesus' family and find themselves in the situation of being foreigners. All that is foreign to us makes us feel frightened and we reject others to protect ourselves. We ask you to encourage us to open our hearts and tear down our walls so that we may experience your presence in the encounter with the Other.*



To visit  
the sick

**Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, ‘Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

But Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ And the angel said to her in reply, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’ Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’”

• Luke 1:26, 27c, 28, 31, 34, 35a, 38



The right to  
health care

Since the beginning Christians have prayed to the Holy Spirit to strengthen and heal the sick. Hospitals were often named after the Holy Spirit in the Middle Ages.

An essential part of Christian life was, and is, the care for the sick independent of their religious, ethnic, or political belonging. In caring indiscriminately for the sick, the sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis in Cameroon are caught in the frontlines of the conflict between anglophone and francophone communities.

*God, Mary with the power of the Holy Spirit fulfilled your will. It is your will that we follow the example of Jesus and care and stand up for the sick. Let us not only care for the sick, but also seek to resolve the root causes of the sickness: undernourishment, environmental contamination, violence and discrimination. Grant us Mary’s courage, to do your will on earth as it is in heaven.*





## To bury the dead

### Give us this day our daily bread.

“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it (in) clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock.

Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.”

• Matthew 27:57-61

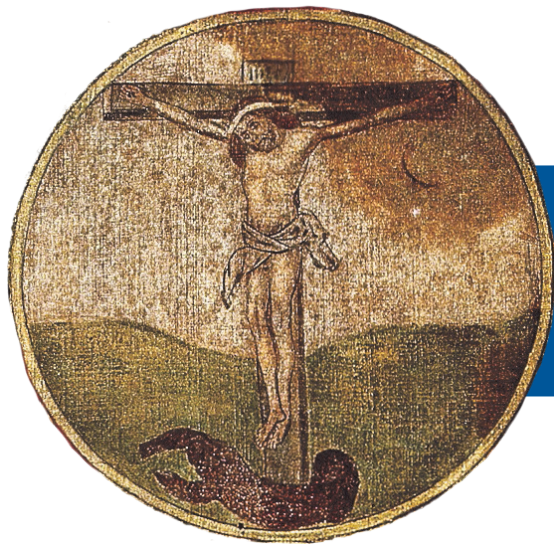


## The right to an dignified burial

To honor the dead is an obligation in many cultures and religions. At the time of the Roman empire, it was common practice to leave the dead bodies of those who had been crucified to rot on the cross. This prevented the relatives from fulfilling this religious obligation and was therefore considered further punishment.

Today, in the Philippines, many people are arbitrarily killed in the president's war on drugs. Most of the victims come from poor families who, adding insult to injury, cannot even afford a funeral or a burial for their loved one. Sister Cres and Brother Buanafe are not only committed to ending these arbitrary killings but also assist the families with the requiem and the burial.

*God, in the celebration of the Eucharist we give thanks for the gift of life. In breaking the bread, we are not only one with you and with each other but also with the departed. Let us appreciate the gift of life and let us honor our departed in dignity and with gratefulness. This we ask you, God, source of all life.*



To clothe  
the naked

### And forgive us our trespasses

“When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier.

They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down.”

• *John 19:23*



The right  
to clothing

Poverty is not so much the result of natural circumstances but rather a consequence of injustice. Today's economic system perpetuates and deepens inequality. While the wealth in the hands of a few grows at the speed of lightening, the wealth of the poorest half of the world population has been declining. Not only in the countries of the Global South, but also in North America and Western Europe. In Berlin, ever increasing numbers of people come to Brother Johannes who provides people in need with clothing.

The work of mercy, to clothe the naked, goes hand in hand with his commitment to defending dignity. When people live in poverty, not only are they deprived of material goods but often feel humiliated.

*God, countless numbers of people are deprived of clothing and their dignity is not respected. Their basic needs are not being met and they find themselves at the mercy of others.*

*Knowing that life is given by you, help us work so that all may enjoy the fruits of the earth equally and be respected in their "right to clothing."*





To visit the  
prisoners

**As we forgive those who  
trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

“While he was still speaking, a crowd approached and in front was one of the Twelve, a man named Judas. He went up to Jesus to kiss him. Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’

His disciples realized what was about to happen, and they asked, ‘Lord, shall we strike with a sword? And one of them struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said in reply, ‘Stop, no more of this!’ Then he touched the servant’s ear and healed him.”

• Luke 22:47-51

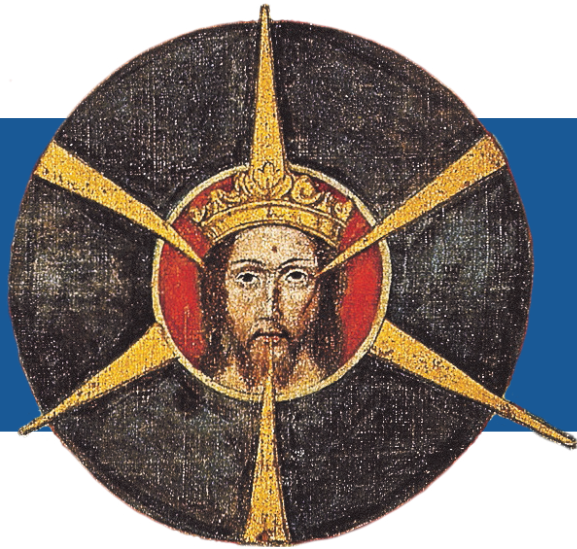
To be free of  
degrading  
treatment



Not only does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declaration prohibit torture, but most states have also ratified the convention against torture. Yet, in over three quarters of all states torture is practiced. When it comes to the treatment of prisoners in general, the record pertaining to the respect of human rights is even more sobering.

Many Franciscans, such as Brother Quentin, work as chaplains in prisons to accompany prisoners, acknowledging their dignity and rights despite whatever wrong they may have done in their lives. This particular work of mercy, to visit the prisoners, calls special attention to the inalienability of each person’s dignity and rights.

*God, in Jesus you gave us an example of radical non-violence. At the moment of his violent arrest, he not only demands that his disciples remain non-violent, he, cares for those who are arresting him. He acts according to his own words “love your enemies.” This may not be easy for us in our personal lives, and even may go beyond our capacity. Nevertheless, we ask you to let us always at least acknowledge the inalienability of every person’s dignity.*



**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory  
are yours now and for ever.**

**Amen**

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God:  
that if we ask anything according to his will,  
he hears us.”

• *John 5:14-15*



Looking at our world,  
how people are treated badly and discriminated against,  
how nature is exploited and destroyed,  
it is difficult to believe that this is the world that you created.

We are inclined to join Jesus in asking,  
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

God, we ask you  
to turn our despair into the hope of Easter  
and help us to believe that life is stronger than death.

Give us the strength to act with mercy  
and to defend the dignity and rights of everyone,  
so that your will be done on earth as it is on heaven and that  
your kingdom come.

Amen.



Since its establishment in 1989, Franciscans International has used advocacy as a tool to combat and curb human rights abuses. We believe respect for human rights must be at the heart of all political processes.

Franciscans International envisions a global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace.

Our work is inspired by these Franciscan values:

### **Humility**

We strive for a simple way of life, recognizing our interdependence with all creation.

### **Reconciliation**

We want to be in harmony with the world around us and promote peace.

### **Fraternity**

We have a profound concern for the marginalized and the oppressed, and maintain a radical openness to “the other”.

### **Justice**

We respect the dignity of every person and all creation, and work for equality.



# **Franciscans International**

A voice at the United Nations

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