



Cycling with Sisters
we're on a mission together!

Prayer Guide for a Pedaling Pilgrimage to promote the social justice work of Catholic Sisters and their Collaborators



We pray for an end to human trafficking.

Introduction: “In the eyes of God, each human being is a free person, whether girl, boy, woman or man, and is destined to exist for the good of all in equality and fraternity.” Modern slavery, in terms of “...human trafficking, forced labor and prostitution, organ trafficking, and any relationship that fails to respect the fundamental conviction that all people are equal and have the same freedom and dignity is a crime against humanity.” —*Faith Leaders’ Universal Declaration Against Slavery, Vatican City, Dec. 2014*

Work of Women Religious and their collaborators:

Many communities and congregations of women religious and their associates work to bring an end to the widespread crime of human trafficking in its many forms. They have taken corporate stances against human trafficking, offered a way out and support to victims of human trafficking, have worked collaboratively to raise awareness of the issue and have supported education and advocacy events.

Faith Alliance to End Human Trafficking is a collaboration of religious and other partners operated by the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Care of Earth of the *Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto* in association with other international groups.

The *Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, Maple Mount, KY*, were one of the founders of UNANIMA International (an NGO advocating on behalf of women and children) and continue to serve on its board. One of its primary goals is to work through the United Nations to help stop human trafficking.

The *Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill* are respectful of human dignity, protective of human rights, and devoted especially to the poor and oppressed; this leads them to educate on human trafficking and the plight of those caught up in it. The *Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, MO*, also educate on this issue.

Let us join our prayer with communities and congregations who work against human trafficking. Visit c4wr.org for links to their web pages and learn more about their work and how you can support them.

Minute to Remember

We pause to remember victims of human trafficking and all those who work to free those caught in the nightmare of this modern slavery.

Prayer

A Prayer for the End of Human Trafficking

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

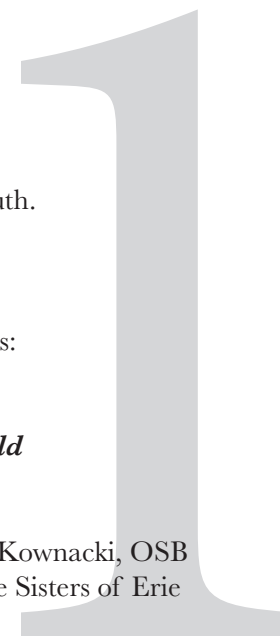
God of freedom, beauty and truth
we believe that your deepest desire,
your most powerful energy,
is that all creation might know abundant life.
We raise our voices in anguished prayer
for our sisters and brothers,
women and girls, men and boys,
who are modern day slaves;
They are your beloved daughters 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.

Refrain or 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.*

— Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of Erie



We pray for the alleviation of poverty in its many forms: hunger, homelessness, lack of health care, unemployment...

Introduction: “The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation.”
— USCCB, *Economic Justice for All, 1986 Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, no. 86

Work of Women Religious and their collaborators:

Women religious have long been on the forefront of following Jesus in walking with the poor, advocating for them and feeding the hungry. They support ministries and programs that provide shelter, job training, access to health care and other resources that are often out of reach of those who are at the bottom of our corporate and societal ladders. Today these good works continue with the collaboration and financial support of their associates, oblates and others who also follow the example of Jesus, protector of the poor. Religious women and their oblates and associates staff clinics for the uninsured, engage in social media campaigns to raise awareness of poverty in our cities and issue calls for system change.

The *Congregation de Notre-Dame* are one of many congregations committed to living and teaching in poor neighborhoods and advocating for the poor. Sisters and those committed to their mission offer outreach to the poor in many forms: soup kitchens, women’s centers, job training programs and emergency shelters.

The *Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, KS*, and other religious women offer financial support to systemic change initiatives. They contact federal and state legislators on behalf of the poor and those without access to health care, decent jobs and housing. The *Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* have a sister who is lobbyist for these issues in Washington, DC.

The *Sisters of Mercy of the Americas* reach out to women in many ways including the Mercy Center for Women that provides transitional housing for women, with or without children, and offers an environment of healing recovery and growth.

The *Sisters of St. Joseph of NWP* monitor legislation on the affordable healthcare act and contact senators and representatives to urge them to not repeal this important piece of legislation.

Let us join our prayer with communities and congregations who work to end poverty. Visit c4wr.org for links to their web pages and learn more about their work and how you can support them.

Minute to Remember

We pause to remember those who are hungry, homeless and frightened, especially the children. We remember those who don’t have access to health care, education and job security.

Prayer

Grow Your Kindness in Me

Shared by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, IA

Teach me to understand, Lord.
Teach me what it is to be thirsty
hungry
fearful
lonely
sick
imprisoned.

Teach me what it is to
lose everything.
Teach me what it is to
lose hope.

Let my new understanding
grow your kindness in me ...
grow your mercy in me ...
grow your forgiveness in me ...
grow your love in me. Amen.

Refrain or mantra

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— Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of Erie



We pray to practice nonviolence and end hate and racism.

Introduction: “To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence.” —*from the annual World Day of Peace Message for January 1, 2017, “Nonviolence—A Style of Politics for Peace.”*

“We lament the racism that continues to afflict our communities and threaten the values that we hold dear....We acknowledge our own complicity in institutional racism. We commit ourselves to cleanse our hearts and rid our land of this evil. We promise to pray for our country and to continue to use our voice and our energy to build God’s beloved community where all are one in Christ Jesus.” — *Leadership Conference of Women Religious*

Work of Women Religious and their collaborators:

At the risk of their own safety women religious live and work in inner-cities and poverty-stricken ghettos and war-torn countries. They often choose difficult stands over financial security refusing to compromise gospel values. For decades they have protested war and weapons. They take in battered women, support domestic abuse shelters and help women start new lives for themselves and their children.

In Erie, PA, the *Sisters of St. Joseph*, the *Benedictine Sisters* and the *Sisters of Mercy of the Americas* have been leading “Take Back the Site Vigils,” short community prayer gatherings at locations where violent death has occurred to reclaim it for peace and pray for all victims.

Many communities, including the *Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston*, have a corporate stance against nuclear arms and resolve to focus energies on peacemaking by confronting world hunger, protesting denial of justice to the poor, seeking systemic change, promoting peace studies, working for inner conversion and remaining faithful to the task of reconciliation and non-violence.

The *Congregation Sisters of St. Agnes* supports two agencies that work to end Sexual and Physical Domestic Violence. This is part of their reverence for life and their commitment to a consistent ethic of life.

Let us join our prayer with communities and congregations who work for peace. Visit c4wr.org for links to their web pages and learn more about their work and how you can support them.

Minute to Remember

We pause to remember victims of violence: hate crimes, racism, domestic and child abuse, gun violence, gang violence, war and militarism, nuclear threats. We remember their families and loved ones who also suffer with them. And we remember each of us, scarred by a culture of violence.

Prayer

Pax Christi USA Vow of Nonviolence

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God...You have learned how it was said, ‘You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy’; but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven.”

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit,
I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

- by striving for peace within myself, seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
- by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

Refrain or mantra

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that the suffering of the world
may come in.*

— Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of Erie

We pray in solidarity with the earth her resources.

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.” — *Pope Francis, Laudato Si #202*

Work of Women Religious and their collaborators:

For more than 40 years women religious have been working to clean up our environment and educate for sustainability. From cleaning up rivers and lakes to demanding clean air standards and improving working conditions to the current emphasis on reversing climate change and decreasing our carbon footprint, women religious have been there.

The *Sisters of St. Ann of the Pacific Northwest, Victoria, BC*, have worked locally as well as nationally “towards right relationship between protecting our earth and its resources and the real needs of human beings for sustainable development.” This includes responsible investing and partnering with other groups working for similar ends, actions undertaken by many congregations.

Endorsing the Earth Charter and embracing education are ways the *Dominican Sisters of San Rafael* live their commitment. “Aligned with the Pope’s call to all people of the world to take ‘swift and unified global action,’ we have undertaken a careful chapter-by-chapter study of the encyclical. It is our hope that reflection and sharing will shape our thinking and behavior so as to be part of a radical change in caring for our planet,” they write on their website.

Eco-Zeal for Mission, a Core Province team of the *Sisters of the Good Shepherd* educates and advocates for the environment. The *Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, OH*, offer regular lectures at their sponsored university and use social media to help spread their message.

Let us join our prayer with communities and congregations who work to save our earth. Visit c4wr.org for links to their web pages and learn more about their work and how you can support them.

Minute to Remember

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

Prayer

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 your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon 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 the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

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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. 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 and 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 their collaborators:

Many communities of women religious were founded by immigrants or to serve immigrant communities. Today, our sisters, associates and oblates continue to welcome immigrants and refugees, call for immigration reform and support immigrants already living among us including migrant farm workers, Dreamers, and Muslims. Our communities sponsor immigrant and refugee resettlement centers, provide language classes and job training. In some areas of the country, communities work with our Muslim brothers and sisters who face ongoing threats of violence and persecution.

In San Antonio, Texas, the *Sisters of Divine Providence* help with displaced immigrants, provide transportation to get them to family members, visit the incarcerated in the camps.

Education and advocacy is another important aspect of the work done by our communities. Vigils, educational presentations and “know your rights” workshops are offered by the *IHM Sisters of Monroe, MI*. The *Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia* Welcome Center teaches ESL classes and helps immigrants with tasks like getting a driver license. They also help prepare them for citizenship and are responsible for 250 new citizens. The *Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross* work with Comunidad Hispana, reaching out to the Hispanic community in Merrill, WI.

The *Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery* run a center for refugee assistance and also offer orientation to the USA to recent arrivals. Through several of their inner-city ministries, the *Benedictine Sisters of Erie* offer refugees opportunities for education, job preparation, food, daycare and access to the arts for children.

Let us join our prayer with communities and congregations who work with refugees and immigrants. Visit c4wr.org for links to their web pages and learn more about their work and how you can support them.

Minute to Remember

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.

Prayer

Excerpt from Prayer for Conscience and Courage

by Joan Chittister, OSB

Saint Benedict of Nursia,
you instructed your followers
to welcome all guests to the monastery,
especially the poor and the pilgrim,
because in them “God is received.”
Touch our conscience
on behalf of refugees and immigrants
and give us the courage
to break ourselves open
to the uncomfortable and the unknown.

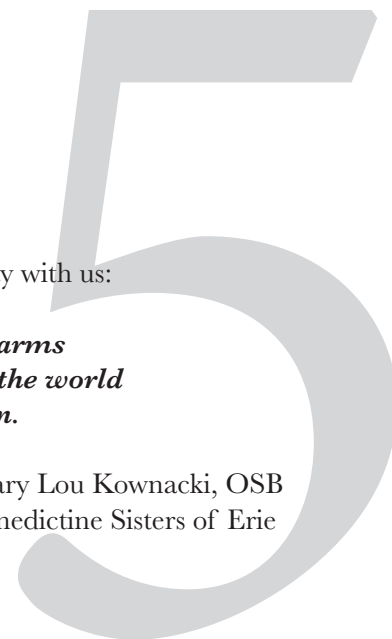
God of conscience, God of courage,
give us whatever grace we need
to work for the coming of the reign of God
now, here and always. Amen.

Refrain or mantra

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may come in.*

— Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of Erie



Cycling with Sisters and Communicators Network for Women Religious would like to thank:

Our cyclists:

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Daina Cyvas, Communications and Project Coordinator,
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Jacqueline Small, Oblate, Benedictine Sisters of Erie
Ruth Bownes, avid cyclist
Ken Bownes, social justice advocate

Our accompanying drivers:

Janice Etchison, Oblate, Benedictine Sisters of Erie
Mary Lou Rathers, SSJ Associate
Jan Staszewski, SSJ Associate
Maxine Kollasch, IHM, A Nun's Life
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