



WOMEN:

MODERN DAY STORIES OF RUTH

Woman, What Do You Seek?

“She is a Moabite girl who has just come back with Naomi from the Moabite country. She asked if she might glean and gather among the swathes behind the reapers. She came and has been on her feet with hardly a moment’s rest from daybreak till now.”

—The Book of Ruth: 1, 5-7

Today her name is Teresa. She has come with her family from Panama... Tomorrow she is Pauline who is here with her husband from Guyana... Yesterday it was Grace who came with her children from Jamaica. Each one asks if she might be hired to work in the field harvesting tomatoes. She will be on her feet with hardly a moment’s rest from daybreak till sunset.

The story of Ruth continues as women worldwide move across borders to find work, seeking to feed and support their families. Sometimes they find welcome, friends and new homes. More often, they find danger, discrimination, exploitation, sexual

harassment and abuse.

Women now make up more than 50 percent of the immigrant population in Europe, Latin America and North America. Women and children make up 75 percent of the casualties of war. Women represent 48 percent of legal

migrants and 42 percent of unauthorized migrants to the United States. They find work as domestics, care-givers, garment workers, agricultural workers. They earn an average of 22 percent less than men and have less access to credit.



Reflecting on Women



The Moabite woman Ruth walks among us every day. Like the Ruth of Scripture, she says to her family: *Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people and your God my God.*

Today Ruth comes from Honduras, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, Bosnia, Mexico, Rwanda and Afghanistan. Often she comes undernourished, traumatized by war, rape, violence, poverty and disease. She may be the woman preparing food in the hospital kitchen, caring for sisters in our retirement homes, sewing shirts in our factories or tending the children in the day care center. She may be the woman next door.

THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRATION AND WOMEN

Approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year. Eighty percent are female; up to half are minors. This figure does not include people trafficked within countries for labor and sexual slavery.

Of the world's 1.3 billion poor, 70 percent are women. Two-thirds of the world's women are illiterate.

Immigrant women often suffer high rates of battering because they have less access to legal and social services, or they are afraid to contact the authorities because of their undocumented status. Those who attempt to flee may not have access to bilingual shelters, financial assistance or food.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 90 percent of workers in the U.S. garment industry are women, and over 50 percent of the garment factories are sweatshops. The *maquiladoras* in Mexico employ mostly single young women who work for as little as \$0.50 an hour six days a week, often up to 75 hours a week with no overtime pay.

"Whatever be the station [women] are destined to fill, their example and advice will always possess influence."

—Catherine McAuley

Action

The Sisters of Mercy have always ministered to women in need. How do Mercy ministries today seek out and minister to immigrant women?

The Institute Justice Conference in 2007 asked each sister, associate and companion to accompany an immigrant, a person who is migrating or someone left behind by family members migrating. Find ways to accompany someone by contacting organizations including:

Catholic Charities

www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/immigration/

Catholic Relief Services

www.crs.org

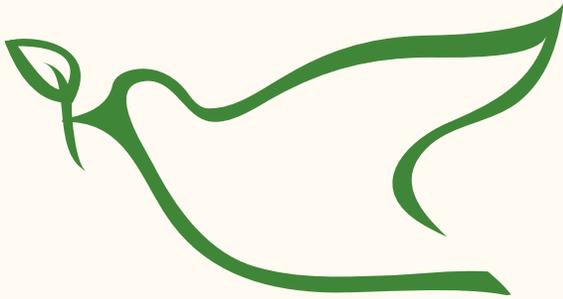
Resources

The Line in the Sand: Stories from the US/Mexico Border. DVD available from Catholic Relief Services.
www.crs.org/dramaproject/

Stop Trafficking! Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter. Co-sponsored by Mercy International Justice Network.
<http://homepage.mac.com/srjeanschafersds/stoptraffic>

Women for Women International. This organization "envisions a world where no one is abused, poor, illiterate or marginalized."

www.womenforwomen.org



NONVIOLENCE: FINDING SAFETY IN A VIOLENT WORLD

The Story of Another Mary—A Refugee

As she stumbled along the road to the refugee camp in Sudan, Mary could not help seeing burned and mutilated bodies of children, animals and neighbors from her village. No one was trying to bury the bodies; most fellow travelers did not seem to notice them. Like the others, Mary walked in a state of shock. Her family had been killed, her village burned and the crops destroyed, and Mary had been raped. Mary has no home, no family, no means of support. Mary is a refugee, one of the survivors.

At the end of 2006, the number of refugees in the world was more than 14 million. The number of conflict-related internally displaced people such as Mary, who had not crossed international borders, was estimated at 24.5 million. Militarism and terrorism wreak havoc especially on the most vulnerable, causing people to flee their homes in search of peace and safety. Thus the stream of refugees across the world grows.

Violence destroyed Mary's home,

and the lives of her family and neighbors. War and genocide drive millions of people from their homes each day. Domestic violence, a more hidden menace, drives an unknown number to seek protection and safety. Other forms of violence—intolerance, deliberate destruction, persecution because of religion, race, sexual orientation or political affiliation—force people to leave their homes, families and villages to seek safety elsewhere. After four years, more than 400,000 Sudanese have been murdered but the international community stands helpless to stop the violence.



Reflecting on Nonviolence

The ancient litany of war and violence goes on: Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Colombia, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan. In 2005, the United States sold \$11.6 billion worth of weapons, 70.2 percent going to developing countries. The killing continues; the flood of refugees increases.

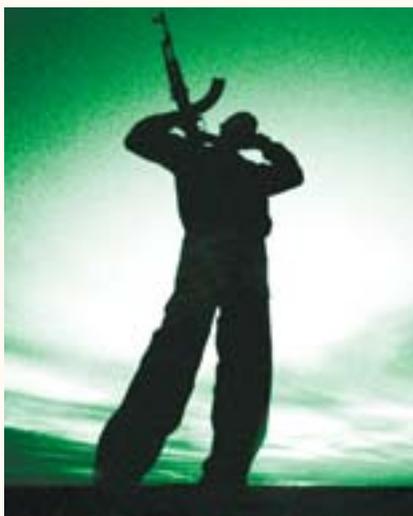
As a community of peace, the Sisters of Mercy publicly oppose the war in Iraq. At the 2005 Institute Chapter, citing “the proliferation of violence” as a root cause of migration, they committed themselves to welcome and serve those whose lives have been shattered by violence. Mercy ministries throughout the Institute are providing assistance to refugees from national, international and domestic violence.

Violence underlies almost all our Critical Concerns. The violence of racism attacks the dignity of a person. The violence of environmental destruction assaults the very life of the planet on which we live. Violence against women saturates our media, our language, our culture. Until we address violence as a foremost cause of immigration, Mary will continue to wander

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“Jesus Christ declared that he would consider as done to Himself whatever should be done unto [the poor].”
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—Catherine McAuley

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the roads of the world, looking for safety, looking for home.



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“The sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land, or ruin and devastation within your borders.”
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—Isaiah 60: 18

THE TRUTH ABOUT NONVIOLENCE AND IMMIGRATION

The most recent report from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees states that 2.1 million Afghans live outside their homeland, followed by 1.5 million Iraqis, 686,000 Sudanese, 460,000 Somalis, and 400,000 each from Congo and Burundi.

Between 50,000 and 100,000 Iraqis flee their country every month; 4.3 million Palestinians have left their country in recent years.

Action

- Does your parish or community participate in the Global Solidarity Partnership Program, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services? Learn how to provide support and assistance to others.

www.crs.org/globalsolidarity

- Gather a group to work for peace in ways that are practical, creative, inclusive and nonviolent. For group process, use *Traveling with the Turtle* to emphasize women's spirituality and peacemaking.

<http://paceebene.org/pace/traveling-with-the-turtle-book>

Resources

- *Called to Something New: A Peoples' Peace Initiative.* A booklet available in Spanish and English, this process reflects on the challenges for Catholic peacemaking in the 21st century. Pax Christi USA.

www.paxchristiusa.org

- *Lives for Sale: A Documentary on Immigration and Human Trafficking.* DVD available from Maryknoll.

www.livesforsale.com

- *Where Is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity and Hope.* By Jon Sobrino, from Orbis Books.

- Protecting Creation

www.ProtectingCreation.org