



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER
Rise Up AND Act for Justice

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A Vision for a Better World

Statement from Lawrence E. Couch, Director
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"It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake." Frederick Douglass

Our country and our world are torn apart by nationalism, racism, civil unrest, pandemic, unemployment, economic disparity, and exploitation of the earth. Many in our country hope to return to "normal." But what has happened has shown the rot on which our "normalcy" was built.

The people who create our new society must themselves be people of color, women, immigrants, and people in poverty and on the margins of society. Otherwise the rot will continue and the new structure also will be swept away.

We are called to move from nationalism to a recognition of the humanity of all people regardless of geography or race or culture. Surely this is the vision that most if not all the major religions call us. So long as we are ensnared in a small, tight, world of limited resources, we will limit our potential for development both as individuals and as a world community.

COVID-19 has dramatically shown us how interrelated we are. While maintaining social distancing, we came to truly recognize our need for each other. Not only are the first line medical providers heroes, but so are the trash collectors and the people who work in grocery stores.

Now we must bring that insight into our work. When national, state, and local budgets are developed, we need to distribute our resources equitably to ensure that those who most require our help have the resources they need. Too easily an "America First" policy devolves into a "me first" mindset.

As we let go of the solitary individual concept and recognize ourselves as social beings in need of each other, we can become less self-destructive. We will see that when we extend ourselves to help the stranger, we become not less but more.

This shift in perspective also will help us to better love and preserve the earth. The earth and its richness are not something to plunder but something to value and to care for. We will better recognize the environment as an essential part of our very being. When we harm the earth, we harm ourselves.

In terms of our relationship with other nations, we will not seek simply to get the better deal but strive for agreements that enrich each nation. Too often, the desire for short-term gain at another nation's expense results in long-term loss. At first, we may seem to win but too often this approach results in civil unrest, armed conflicts, and war.

The change in perspective from the individual to the community also would change our trade agreements. Aside from looking at the cheapest price, we would try to look more deeply into the manufacture and transportation of goods. Is slave labor involved? Under what working conditions were the goods manufactured? What safeguards can we implement as a nation to help improve the working conditions of other nations?

Most of the inhumanity in the world is the result of our seeing each other and the earth itself simply as resources to enrich ourselves, our families, and our nation. Politicians ask us, "Are you better off this year than last year?" Perhaps a better question would be, "Is your neighbor better off this year than last year?" This is not just idealism; it is a change of perspective that is necessary for our survival.

[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and are in 70 countries on 5 continents and have had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.