



**Mercy Education**  
System of the Americas

**Educación de la  
Misericordia**  
Sistema de las Américas

**2019 MERCY EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

# **IMMIGRATION**

**Hosted by Mount St. Mary Catholic High School**

October 18-19 | Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel

## Thank You to the Members of the 2019 Conference Committee

### **Kimberly Baxter**

Associate Director for Programs & Services  
Mercy Education System of the Americas  
Silver Spring, Maryland

### **Karen L. Calta**

Assistant Directress, Faculty & Curriculum  
Mount Saint Mary Academy  
Watchung, New Jersey

### **Whitney Faires**

Vice Principal  
Mount St. Mary Catholic High School  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

### **Anne Knapke**

Principal  
Gwynedd-Mercy Academy Elementary School  
Spring House, Pennsylvania

### **Holly McCoy**, Committee Chair

Assistant Principal  
Mercy High School  
Omaha, Nebraska

### **Sarah Peace**

Principal  
Mercy Academy  
Louisville, KY



## Mercy and Immigration

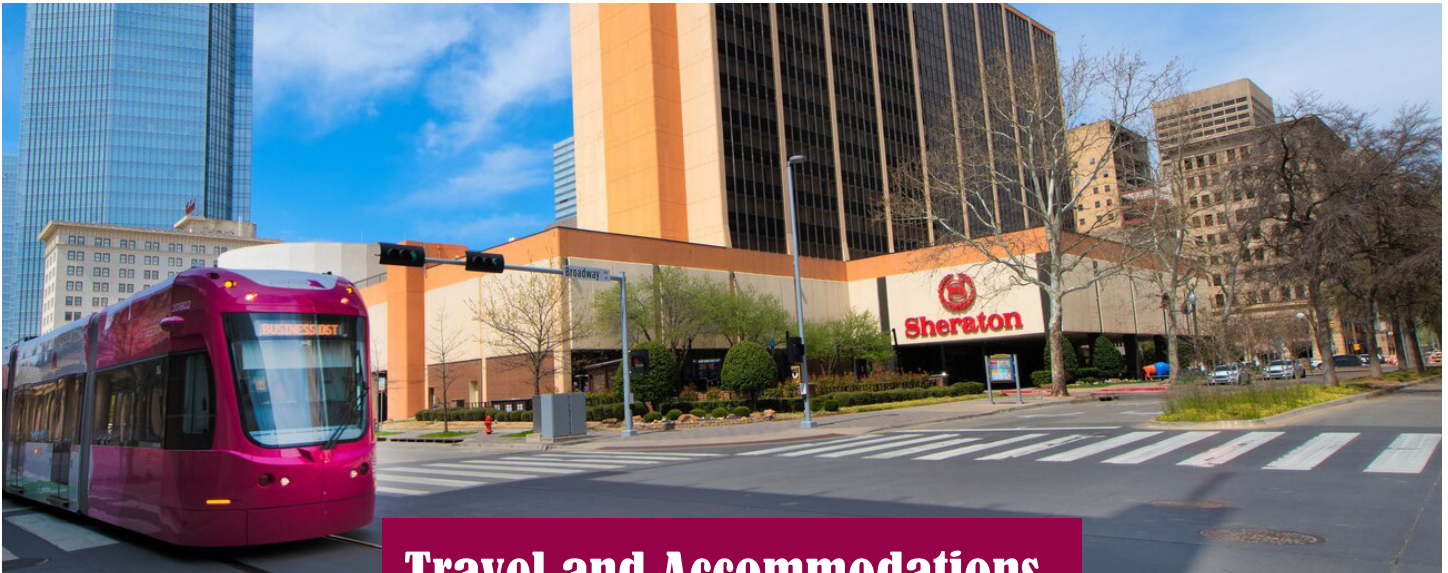
The focus of the 2019 Mercy Education Conference is the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concern for immigration. The language of the Critical Concern states, "In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, the Mercy community advocates for the safety and protection of all migrants and for just and humane immigration reform in the United States that reunites families, provides a pathway to citizenship, protects young people and provides for fair enforcement of the law. We must work together to ensure the dignity of immigrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking and stand in solidarity with all who suffer oppression."

The Mercy Education Conference Committee believes that understanding immigration is understanding human consciousness and how such issues are connected in ways of which we are not always aware. To address the Critical Concern of immigration requires a willingness to engage and wrestle with the issues and the surrounding institutions that play a role. It is in this vein that we offer this conference. The keynote presentations and breakout sessions will provide information on the historical and political context that led us to where we are today and will reflect upon what the Mercy Critical Concern for immigration means to us as individuals and as Mercy educators. The conference will also address the many ways that we can effect change in our schools, communities and church.

Program cover design by Donna Abrams, art instructor at Mount Saint Mary Academy (Watchung, New Jersey).

**[Visit the Conference Website](#)**

**[Register Here](#)**



## Travel and Accommodations

### Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel

1 North Broadway Avenue  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102  
Phone: (405) 235-2780

[Group rate \(\\$129/night\) available - reserve your room here](#)



#### Airport Information

Will Rogers World Airport  
7100 Terminal Drive  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

#### Rideshare Information

Uber Estimate: \$18 one way  
Lyft Estimate: \$15-18 one way



#### Airport Express Shuttle Service

*Can accommodate up to five people.  
One-way pricing to the hotel is \$27  
for the first person and \$3 for each  
additional person, up to five people.*

Reservations can be made online for  
one-way or round-trip:

[www.airportexpressokc.com](http://www.airportexpressokc.com)  
(405) 681-3311 or 877-688-3311



# Program Schedule

## ADMINISTRATORS MEETING

**17**  
THU

- 9:00 am - 12:00 pm**  
Meeting for School Administrators
  - 12:00 - 1:00 pm**  
Lunch
  - 1:00 - 5:00 pm**  
Meeting for School Administrators
  - 4:00 - 7:00 pm**  
Conference Registration Opens
- 

## EDUCATION CONFERENCE

**18**  
FRI

- 7:30 - 8:30 am**  
Breakfast and Registration
- 8:30 - 9:30 am**  
Welcoming Remarks and Opening Prayer
- 9:45 - 11:15 am**  
Keynote Address: Sister Kathleen Erickson, RSM
- 11:15 - 11:30 am**  
Announcements and Door Prizes
- 11:30 am - 12:30 pm**  
Lunch
- 12:30 - 1:30 pm**  
Breakout Session #1
- 1:45 - 2:45 pm**  
Breakout Session #2
- 3:00 - 3:30 pm**  
Table Discussions and Large Group Sharing
- 3:30 - 3:45 pm**  
Announcements and Door Prizes

**Optional Night Out Activities** - see page 9

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**19**  
SAT

- 7:30 - 8:30 am**  
Breakfast
- 8:30 - 9:00 am**  
Prayer and Announcements
- 9:15 - 10:15 am**  
Breakout Session #3
- 10:30 - 11:30 am**  
Breakout Session #4
- 11:45 am - 12:00 pm**  
Announcements and Door Prizes
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm**  
Lunch
- 1:00 - 2:00 pm**  
Keynote Address: Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM
- 2:00 - 2:15 pm**  
Break
- 2:15 - 3:00 pm**  
Table Discussions (by Ministry) and Large Group Sharing
- 3:30 pm**  
Depart for Sacred Heart Church
- 4:00 - 9:00 pm**  
Liturgy at Sacred Heart Church followed by dinner and entertainment at Mount St. Mary Catholic High School

# Keynote Speakers

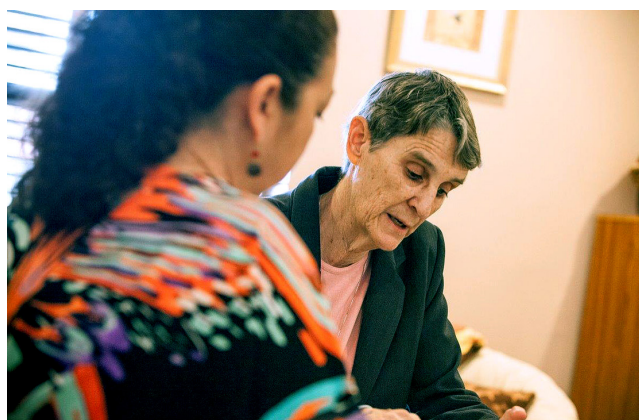
## Sister Kathleen Erickson, RSM



**Sister Kathleen Erickson, RSM**, has been involved in immigration ministry since 1991 and spent nearly 20 years at the United States-Mexico border working with immigrant women. She has provided spiritual support to detained immigrants in federal detention centers and county jails and has spent weeks volunteering

in El Paso as immigrants are being released by ICE with a need for shelter and support. In March 2019, Sister Kathleen participated in a “root causes” pilgrimage to Honduras to deepen understanding of the reasons for forced migration, including corporate greed and the effects of climate change. She is committed to raising awareness about the need for deeper examination of the complex causes of immigration and the call for active response. She recently participated in the Catholic Campaign for immigrants and was arrested with 70 others in Washington D.C. during a demonstration of support for detained immigrant children. Sister Kathleen’s keynote will address the historical/political context that led us to where we are today and reflect upon what the Mercy Critical Concern for immigration means to us as individuals, as Mercy educators and as Catholics.

## Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM



**Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM**, is a native of Springfield, Missouri. She is a nurse by education and professional choice and has served in a variety of positions in various Mercy hospitals. She served as a missionary for 10 years in Guatemala and Southern Mexico in the early 80s and 90s. Upon returning to the

United States in 1992, Sister Rosemary was invited by Ernesto “Buddy” Flores, then Administrator of Mercy Medical Center, to return to Laredo, Texas, and re-establish herself in ministry there. Sister Rosemary has been in Laredo for over 25 consecutive years serving in various roles and advocating for some of Laredo’s most needy and vulnerable persons. Currently she serves as Director of Outreach Services at Mercy Clinic and as Executive Director of Casa de Misericordia. She also visits detainees at local detention centers, makes home visits and hospital visits and responds to invitations for public speaking. She serves on multiple boards and committees and still manages to keep up her obligations to her religious community. Sister Rosemary’s keynote will focus on the many ways that we as Mercy educators should affect change in our own communities, schools and church.



## Breakout Sessions

### **Advocating for Migrants Under Threat: Capturing the Human Face**

*Panelists: John Baldridge, Buff Easterly and Jean Stokan*

This presentation addresses current threats to immigrants and how immigrant and faith advocates are rising to the challenges. Topics include the legal status for DACA recipients, the aggressive increase in detention and deportations, the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and root causes of migration. Participants will discover faithful responses to these threats including local emergency response, immigrant-rights resources, legislative advocacy and public witness.

### **Empowering Immigrants: Building Community and Supporting Families through Access to Essential Services**

*Panelists: Michael Brooks, Robin Larkins*

The speakers will cover various social and legal services that are available to individuals and families immigrating to the United States. These include family petitions, adjustment of status and other legal services as well as special protections for those most vulnerable: children and victims of domestic violence and other crimes. Social services include health care and the SNAP program.

### **Immigration Resources and Projects from MESA Schools**

*Panelists: Elizabeth Decosse and Kari Sims*

The Motto Project at Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women (Rochester, New York) allows students to connect their talents, passions and interests through a coordinated effort developing and executing action, research and presentation. The Service Learning and Leadership Program at Academy of Our Lady of Mercy (Louisville, Kentucky) builds powerful leadership skills through service to those most vulnerable through direct action and social action to accomplish long-term systemic change. Through the course of this four-year program, students are transformed into active citizens equipped to take on real-world challenges.

### **“Walk a Mile in My Shoes” Refugee Simulation from Jesuit Refugee Services**

*Facilitated by religion department faculty and students from Mount St. Mary Catholic High School*

Today, there are more than 68.5 million displaced people around the world, the most since World War II. While it is impossible to fully comprehend what it is like to be forced from your home and live as a refugee, Jesuit Refugee Service’s “Walk a Mile in My Shoes” simulation provides individuals with an opportunity to begin to understand what it might be like.



# Meet Our Panelists



**John Baldrige** teaches Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics and World Geography at Mount St. Mary Catholic High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He has earned undergraduate degrees in History Education and Geography and is an inductee in the Hall of Fame at Northeastern State University. He recently earned a master's degree in education leadership from the University of Notre Dame. John has completed an internship with the National Geographic Society and devotes time outside of the classroom traveling the world and integrating his knowledge and experiences into the courses he teaches. He recently visited his 27th country, Morocco, to participate in a Fulbright program for teachers. John is passionate about sharing the world with his students while helping them visualize connections between the curriculum and contemporary issues of our day. John is currently completing the Global Educator program at the U.S. Department of State.



**Michael Brooks** is a Democratic member of the Oklahoma State Senate, representing District 44. He was first elected to the chamber in a special election in July 2017. Senator Brooks is the only Latino member of the Senate, and one of three in the legislature. Michael is an attorney specializing in immigration and criminal defense and serves as CEO of Michael Brooks-Jimenez, P.C., a law firm in South Oklahoma City. Senator Brooks graduated from Mount St. Mary Catholic High School. He holds a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University and earned his J.D. from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. Outside of his business and work at the Capitol, Michael volunteers for several organizations. He currently serves as President of the Board of Santa Fe South Charter Schools. He is a former board chair and current member of the Latino Community Development Agency Board of Directors and is also a board member for the Alliance for Economic Development. A lifelong resident of South Oklahoma City, Michael and his wife, Jessica Martinez-Brooks, have two children, Joaquin and Lucy, and the family attends St. James the Greater Catholic Church in South Oklahoma City.



**Elizabeth Decosse** is the Motto Project Coordinator at Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women in Rochester, New York. The Motto Project is a senior capstone project encompassing the Critical Concerns and core values of the Sisters of Mercy. Each senior completes this three-part project - consisting of journaling, carrying out an action and a final presentation - prior to graduation. Elizabeth is in her second year as the program coordinator, and the position feeds her passion for volunteer work and helping students find their opportunity to be pioneers of change. Prior to this position, Elizabeth has taught health education at Our Lady of Mercy for the past 11 years and health education and special education in the Churchville-Chili Central School District. She has a Bachelor of Science in Health Science from SUNY Brockport and a Master's in Special Education from Nazareth College. She resides in Spencerport, New York, with her husband Scott and her two children, who attend Mercyhurst University.



**Buff Cutcliffe Easterly** is a Mercy Associate and theology instructor at Mount St. Mary Academy in Little Rock, Arkansas. Theology IV is a study in adult discipleship focusing on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. Her students are given the opportunity to study some of the most important issues of our time in relation to their faith and their ability to make our world a better place. Her recent participation in the Mercy Border Delegation to McAllen, Texas, hosted by ARISE, helped to cement her beliefs about the immigration crisis and how important it is as an educator to be able to convey her personal experiences to her students.



**Robin Larkins** is the Chairperson and President of Curiositas Inc., in Dobbs Ferry, New York, which provides high-caliber, academically-based STEAM enrichment to students of all backgrounds, regardless of means. Previously Robin served in program administration and project management roles for community outreach services of Cabrini of Westchester, including Director of Cabrini Immigrant Services and project management of senior affordable housing feasibility. At Cabrini Eldercare Robin was responsible for marketing and business development planning. As corporate advisor for the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, she advised the leadership council on corporate, strategic planning and governance matters pertaining to their incorporated ministries. Robin also worked at the Philadelphia law firm of Blank Rome as the Director of Marketing and was responsible for strategic marketing,

new business development, branding, communications and special event planning. Robin taught various marketing, sales and public relations courses at Cabrini University.



**Kari Sims** is in her 10th year at Mercy Academy in Louisville, Kentucky. A member of the Theology Department, Kari has eight years of experience teaching all levels of theology curriculum with a special focus on the integration of service learning. She is currently serving in her second year as Director of Service Learning and Leadership, overseeing the entire four-year service learning program at the Academy. Kari came to Louisville after having spent two years in mission with the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. While there, her passion for service and social justice was deepened. She believes in empowering youth to enact lasting social change in our world. With over 15 years of experience in education, she holds a B.S.E. and B.A. from Drake University and in 2017 completed an M. A. in Social Responsibility and Sustainable Communities from Western Kentucky

University. Inspired by the work of the Sisters of Mercy, she is in the process of becoming a Mercy Associate.



**Jean Stokan** has served on the Institute Justice Team for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in Silver Spring, Maryland, for 10 years. She has worked on human rights in Latin America and immigration policies, and her work includes: direct advocacy on Capitol Hill, public witness activities, coalition initiatives with immigrant-led organizations (e.g., United We Dream) and engagement of grassroots faith constituencies on these issues. For over 30 years, Jean has led faith delegations to Central America and more recently to the U.S.-Mexico border. She also serves on the national council for Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement, promoting nonviolent alternatives to war, and served as Policy Director for SHARE Foundation, leading delegations to El Salvador during the war years and fostering people-to-people solidarity. She is married to Scott Wright and has a daughter Maura Stokan-

Wright. They lived for several years in Assisi Community, a community of lay and religious committed to simple lifestyle and social justice concerns.





## Friday, October 18 Optional Night Out Activities

### Option 1 - Brewery Crawl and Dinner

Join us for the ultimate Oklahoma City brewery experience. Learn about the brewing process and taste a variety of the City's best craft beers all while hanging out with staff from Mount St. Mary and other Mercy educators. Transportation from hotel to breweries and back to hotel provided by Mount St. Mary.

- Departure from hotel at 5:30. The first beer tasting will begin at 6:00 pm.
- Four brewery stops: [Anthem](#), [Coop Ale Works](#), [Angry Scotsman](#), and [OKC Taproom](#). We will have dinner at the last stop, OKC Taproom.
- Special pricing will be available for our group at each brewery. Paying for dinner and beers is on your own at each location.

### Option 2 - Bricktown

This former warehouse district is an easy walk from the Sheraton and filled with restaurants, nightlife and entertainment options. Just north of Bricktown is historic Deep Deuce, where you can find more great restaurants and nightlife options.

Best ways to see Bricktown:

- [Bricktown Water Taxi](#) - This 40-minute trip is the perfect way to tour Bricktown. All taxis are staffed by ambassadors that narrate points of interest along the way and give a feel for the unique history and culture of the area. Tickets are \$11 or \$9.50 for those age 65 and over.
- [Oklahoma City StreetCar](#) - Bricktown Loop. Tickets are \$1 for single ride, \$3 for 24-hour pass.
- By Foot - Enjoy Bricktown while walking the canal and enjoying the sights and sounds of our beautiful city.

### Option 3 - Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum

The Memorial Museum takes you on a chronological self-guided tour through the story of April 19, 1995, and the days, weeks and years that followed the bombing of Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

You will have approximately two hours to tour the museum, including a short talk from a survivor/rescue worker. At 6 pm when the museum closes, you can explore the touching outside exhibit for as long as needed. Ticket pricing is \$15 per person or \$12 for military or over 62 years.

- Transportation provided by Mount St. Mary to and from the hotel.
- We will depart immediately following the final session on Friday (3:45 pm).



## See You in 2020 - Kingston, Jamaica!

The 2020 Mercy Education Conference will be hosted by our Mercy schools in Jamaica at the [Jamaica Pegasus Hotel](#) in Kingston, Jamaica. Join us as we focus on our Mercy Critical Concern for Earth.



### Education Conference and Administrator Meeting: October 14-17, 2020 [Exact dates TBD]

**Conference 2019 Evaluation Form**

Your feedback is so important to us. Please complete the online evaluation form for the 2019 Mercy Education Conference:

[bit.ly/mec-evaluation-2019](https://bit.ly/mec-evaluation-2019)

Link will be active on October 20. Thank you!

**Immigration Resources**

[Critical Concerns Curriculum Guides](#)

[Critical Concerns Poster](#)

[Mercy for Immigrants](#)

[Sisters of Mercy Immigration Resources](#)

**Connect with MESA and Mercy**

[MESA Flash Newsletter](#)







[Sisters of Mercy Advocacy Alerts](#)