

The Vision of the Sisters of Mercy New Members



On January 29, 2009, five candidates of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia were engaged in a combined formation program at Goroka, Papua New Guinea. After three weeks we were encouraged to present a response.

As we come from three different countries of origin, what follows is our “united nations” statement: our perspective as this generation of future Sisters.

Given that we share the spiritual inheritance of Catherine McAuley, a woman of faith and courage, who trusted in God's providence,

Given the values of Catherine McAuley: mercy, spirituality, respect, dignity, hospitality, empowerment, immediacy of needs, flexibility and compassion,

Given that the Sisters of Mercy, who began in 1827 with just two women, and who made the first foundation outside Dublin just nine years later, today comprises over 9,000 women working in 44 countries,

Given the extent of the wider Mercy community of friends and associates,

Given the unique history of the Mercy Sisters: their initiative, independence and radical response to the needs of the contemporary situations in which they find themselves,

Given that today we are connected as a global community like never before; our abilities are strengthened through improved communication, technology, travel, media, knowledge and people, and that together we multiply our individual strength,

Given the richness of our cultural diversity,

Given that we still have the “sad, dejected faces” of the poor before us, now as in Catherine's time,

Given that we are now aware of new needs and problems, of social and economic injustice, in both developed and developing countries,

Given the issues of poverty: hunger, unemployment, lack of water, inadequate sanitation, high incidences of infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, preventable diseases, lack of accessible and affordable education, exploitation of resources, slavery and forced prostitution, and human trafficking,

Given the issues of relationships: male domination, women's inferior status, family breakdown, polygamy, child abuse, and detachment from Mother Earth,

Given the issues of violence: war, weapons proliferation, domestic violence, child soldiers, terrorism, the destruction of our planet, refugees and internal displacement,

Given the issues of religion: a means for cultural exploitation, an excluding power, a neglect of creation, a voice unable to speak to people's lives, and misappropriation to justify violence.

Given also the power and potential of Mercy vows and community life; its proved demonstration of involvement, ownership and responsibility,

This group of future Sisters of Mercy,

Affirms, with Catherine McAuley, our relationship with God underpinning and giving motivation for all we do,

Prays for ongoing discernment and deep listening to the Spirit,

Encourages the connection of Mercy Sisters around the world, the sharing of stories and prayer – as a source of encouragement, nourishment, relationship-building in partnership, recognition and information – with reconfiguration where necessary, sharing of personnel with expertise, and the possibility of becoming a Mercy Sister of the World,

Encourages the valuable and progressive work of Mercy Global Concern to link and inform Mercy Sisters, needs-assess for priority areas, research common solutions and targeted action, establish foundations/work, and provide an international advocacy voice for local issues,

Reaffirms our history of working with governments to advocate for the rights of those who are not given a voice,

Invites the welcoming of Mercy-inspired organizations and cooperation with the lay community, other organizations, other Christian denominations and other faiths,

Encourages us to recognize and appreciate our cultural diversity, cooperating with sensitivity and respect,

Encourages the nurturing of vocations to the Sisters of Mercy with appropriate education to serve effectively in different contexts, as well as honouring the vocations of all to the wider lay Mercy community,

Reaffirms our ministries of spiritual and corporal works of Mercy,

Encourages the methods of empowerment: teaching the dignity of each person with respect of the self, providing relevant education with skills training, empowering women to have leadership, practical skills and independence, and inclusively working with women and men for increased understanding and cooperation, giving dignity and respect to all,

Encourages the methods of mission: reassessment of traditional missionary forms, providing a hand up rather than a handout, ensuring sustainability with independence, and utilizing local culture and expertise,

Encourages the methods of management: responsibly using our earth's resources, supporting families to work cooperatively with the land, responsible use of money and economic planning to direct funding from developing countries to build capacity for the less-well-off,

Encourages the methods of peace-building: the study of peaceful resolution of conflict and means of nonviolence.

Prayerfully requests that the Sisters of Mercy, inspired by the example of Jesus and the foresight of Catherine McAuley, implements this vision as the Spirit leads us.

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