

## LIVING THE MERCY CHARISM

### 25 YEARS OF MERCY ASSOCIATES IN GLADSTONE



#### Lighting the fire

Catherine McAuley, an Irish woman, 1778 -1841 founded the Sisters of Mercy in the 1830's. At the time of her life, Dublin was a harsh city of poverty and oppression. Disease and death common. Life for the poor was wretched.

Catherine's faith journey began with her parents. Even when she was orphaned at an early age, she continued her father's work of visiting the poor in the slums.

At the age of 25, Catherine went to live with a wealthy family who supported her charitable works. Upon their death in 1822, she inherited their wealth and was able to build the house to follow her 'works of Mercy' in earnest.

There, young girls were trained, children received education and then later the foundation of the Sisters of Mercy. Effectively, most of Catherine's life was really akin to today's 'Mercy Associate' except for her ten years as a professed Sister of Mercy.



*"There are things the 'poor' prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing: among these are the kind word, the gentle compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows".*

- Catherine McAuley

In December 1838, Catherine wrote:

*"Don't let crosses vex or tease; try to meet all with peace and ease.  
Notice the faults of every day; but often in a playful way.  
And when you seriously complain, let it be known it gives you pain.  
Attend to one thing at a time – you've fifteen hours from 6 till 9.  
Be mild and sweet in all your ways; Now and again bestow some praise.  
Avoid all solemn declaration, all serious, close investigation.  
Turn what you can into a jest, and with few words, dismiss the rest.  
Keep patience ever at your side; You'll want it for a constant guide.  
Show fond affection every day, and above all devoutly pray  
That God may bless the charge He's given, and make of you their Guide to Heaven."*

The parting advice of your ever affectionate - M.C. McAuley.

## The Signs of the Times...

In 1991, the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy, conscious of diminishment and aging, made a wise decision *“to explore avenues for men and women of any age to participate with them in Mercy life and works, while continuing to live out their particular call in life”*.

This was a courageous response to the Signs of the Times. It opened the possibility for Laity to live, in their own way, their Charism of Mercy that had enriched Gladstone through their many years of service and presence as Sisters among us.

## New Ways of Mercy in action arise...

In Gladstone, (late 1991) Sr Maria Goretti RSM realised that there were many people willing to help the needy. When invited, to form a group, some 25 parishioners enthusiastically responded. This new group spent twelve months in preparation, learning about the life and charism of Catherine McAuley. An Induction was held in September 1992. Badges and Certificates were presented by Sister Bernice Lock RSM. As this new vision evolved, both Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates strived to make the wonder of God’s work an inspiration for their own lives and service. It is really one Charism with many parts that unites us together.



Sr Bernice



Pat Keen & Joan Kidd

## The Mercy Associate Charism grows...



1998 saw the election of our first lay Coordinators, Norma Tanna and Jim Hyslop.

Sr Maria continued as Mentor.

New initiatives, appropriate for a lay life style surfaced: the *‘Ring-Around-prayer’* and private prayer as foundation for service: Eucharistic Ministers; visitation of the Sick; ‘Vinnies’, Mission to Seafarers, Endeavour Foundation and Meals on Wheels.



Jim Hyslop & Laurie Meredith

A successful “Casserole Bank” first began with Associates cooking food available for such emergencies as parents battling to look after children, bereaved families, the elderly living alone and temporarily unable to cook.

When the Mater opened in 2000, a window opened for a ministry of Hospitality with the Sisters which still continues today but minus the Sisters. In simple ways,

Associates lived the Mercy charism, offering tea, coffee and a kind word to day-surgery patients, prepare file sheets for medical records and organise ‘under’ sheets, theatre gowns, swabs and other items utilised in surgery. These Mercy Works still continue today.



Pat Jefferis & Therese Timson

## And matures...

In 2003, Sr Beryl Amedee replaced Sr Maria as mentor and continues to journey with the Associates until today. The Group gathered on the 1st Saturday each month. Speakers were invited to share expertise and experience, enriching the Associates and Parishioners who wished to attend the gatherings. Donations were raised to assist both local and overseas "Mercy Works".



Sr Maria with Narelle Guinea & Sr Mary Moynihan

*Passing the Mercy torch from the generation of wonderful professed Religious Sisters to a new generation called Mercy Associates*

*Mercy Associates* are guided by the mercy values of compassion, justice, hope and hospitality. We celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love and strive to express that mercy in our lives..

- In response to the needs of our time;
- In the ordinariness of our daily lives;
- In all our relationships.



Mary Taylor & Beryl Irwin



Denis & Joan Reynolds



## Strengthening the Associates identity

In 2014, the Sisters of Mercy moved to strengthen the identity of Mercy Associates as a movement which was specifically for lay women and men. The Sisters believed this would enable Mercy Associates to appreciate their call to live the Mercy Charism as an expression of their baptismal call to live as servant disciples of the Lord.

## Keeping the flame burning

Both Religious and Laity, each in their own ways, live mercy. Who we are is about living in a privileged way as Laity, the Mercy of Christ that inspired Catherine McAuley. It is one Charism, many parts.



Shirley Coulson



Del Jordan



Dot Horn & Nora Schedny



Marie Ann Martin & Annette Rowe



**Volunteers Day 2017**

(All but three ladies are Mercy Associates)  
 Trish Lynch, Norma Reynolds, Shaneen McAuliffe,  
 Geraldine Laird and Maria Myers



Norma Tanna & Betty Smith



Dora Bradford & Von Mylne



Doreen Littlemore, Norma Reynolds, Betty Neilsen, Ann Fitzgerald



**May 1998**

**Back Row L-R**

Nora Schedny, Ev Gormley, Gert Jefferis, Leonie Johnson, Chrissy Howard, Barbara Filer, Mary Taylor, Joan Kidd

**Middle Row**

Dot Realf, Ann Fitzgerald, Sr. Maria Goretti rsm, Pat Keen, Aileen Turich & Sr Josephine Curran.

**Front Row**

Sr. Mary Moynihan, Annette Rowe and Pat Weiner

Majority of photos taken from Sr Maria Goretti's photo album