



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 5, May 2018

Welcome ...

It has been a joy to read the many articles submitted for this edition of **Many Paths**. Each tells of the richness of the faith, fellowship and activities of Mercy Associates groups—I'm in no doubt you'll enjoy reading them.

For this edition, Sr Gaye Lennon, a member of the Institute Leadership Team, has written an article. Gaye is the ILT member who has oversight of Mercy Associates, and her support and interest are very much appreciated.

Each edition is special, but a highlight in this one includes an account of the development of a new Mercy Associates group in Toronto (Newcastle area), who recently held their inaugural commitment ceremony. Grace Soley has provided an account of this new group's journey that you'll enjoy reading.

The request for 'favourite' prayers met with the not-very-surprising result that the favourite prayer is the **Suscipe**, followed closely by the hymn **Circle of Mercy**. However, the Young group have sent a prayer which you'll find on page 8, and Annette Rowe from Gladstone has sent a beautiful poem by Melbourne Sister of Mercy Mary Wickham (p. 2).

Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**

National Reconciliation Week 2018

The theme for National Reconciliation Week this year is 'Don't Keep History A Mystery: Learn. Share. Grow.' During the week (and at other times!), Australians are invited to 'learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, to share that knowledge and help us grow as a nation.'

If you would like to know more about the origins and meaning of the week, please visit <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/> or have a conversation with a friend.

Please note that National Reconciliation Week is preceded by National Sorry Day (Saturday 26 May), a day which acknowledges the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities. The week officially ends with Mabo Day (Sunday 3 June) which marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in the Meriam Island Land Claim, overturning the legal principle of *Terra Nullius*.



The above article was written by **Jeanette Morris**, a Mercy Associate from Ballarat. Jeanette has provided the following information about herself:

I am a proud Buanditj (South Australia/Victoria Aboriginal) woman who has lived in many communities across Australia. I am equally proud of being a Mercy Associate and cherish the camaraderie and heart-felt encouragement I receive from the Sisters and fellow Associates. Most of my working life has been in education, particularly in tertiary. For the past sixteen years I have been the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer for the Ballarat Catholic Education Office, a role which suits me as it combines my love of my people with my passion for learning and teaching. It also allows me to travel not just within the diocese but also further afield, to cities and towns throughout Australia and the world.



May He bless and protect you, and make you the instrument of His glory.

Letter to Frances Warde
June 16, 1838

We are walking each other home....



In recent weeks I have engaged with the beauty and complexity of my own being and the being of others, through my experiences in the Philippines, Dublin and Ballarat in particular. A quote has grabbed my attention and encouraged pondering: 'We are walking each other home' (Ram Dass and Paul Gorman). It immediately conjured up images of Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and of those who walk with me. I am reminded of the words from the Constitutions (2.01) of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, 'The tender mercy of God has given us one another.' If someone 'walks me home' I trust them enough to know where I live. I feel the companionship of sharing the journey, of inviting them into my home and all the deeper levels of sharing that that may mean. It speaks of intimacy, openness, hospitality, of love... We are walking each other

home. It strikes me that we do this for myriad reasons and hopefully the journey brings me, us, closer to the Source who is our home, through our own particular call to Mercy.

Pope Francis in his latest exhortation *Gaudete Et Exsultate* calls us to see the entirety of our lives as mission. He reminds us that the important thing is that each of us 'discerns her own path, that she brings out the very best of herself, the most personal gifts that God has placed in her heart rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for her...' We are walking each other home.

May this journey of walking each other home have you living deeply into 'the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life.' (*Gaudete Et Exsultate* No. 24). May you discover again and again the beauty and complexity of loving companions who likewise are searching and just doing their best, their living out of their call. And finally I offer Rumi's words: 'Don't you know yet? It is your light that lights the worlds.'

Sr Gaye Lennon rsm, Institute Leadership Team



Meeting

May you meet Mercy each day:
in the light of your own heart,
at the hands of your loved ones,
in the eyes of the stranger
and of the needy.

And if by chance you do not at first meet it,
listen patiently for word of it
and it will tap you on the shoulder:

a quiet surprise,
a small gesture,
the tender look
given and received
in the encounters of your day.

Mary Wickham RSM
Souvenirs of Spirit: Poems and Prayers,
Spectrum publications

Working with Children cards

Remember that if you or others in your Mercy Associates group are **directly dealing with children and young people (under 18 years) in your role as a Mercy Associate**, you must apply for and be issued with a Working With Children card.

Contact the Department of Communities (or equivalent) in your state to obtain application forms. ISMAPNG is the organisation you need to name in the 'Organisation' section, and as a Mercy Associate, you are a 'Volunteer'.



Inaugural Commitment Ceremony for Toronto



On Saturday 5th May 2018 the Toronto Mercy Associates celebrated a commitment ceremony of eight new women and four women making a re-commitment. Certificates and badges were presented by Sr Mary Geason rsm, Community Leader Central B. The ceremony was held at Our Lady of the Lake House of Retreat, Toronto.

The theme of the ceremony was *All Are Welcome* so to commence our morning it seemed only fitting to start with an acknowledgment to country which was led by Sr Pat Adams rsm in the grounds overlooking Lake Macquarie. We returned indoors and gathered around our sacred space and sang *All Are Welcome* by Marty Haugen. As well as the eight new women we had four original Mercy Associates join us and seven Sisters of Mercy, a total of 18 women on the day. As a symbol of love from the Sisters and current Associates, hands were placed on the shoulder of each new Associate and a blessing using words from Catherine McAuley was shared.

A Gospel reading was shared – Luke 10:25-37, and a quiet personal reflection time was entered into after which open sharing was encouraged. Certificates and badges and a gift of a cup and saucer to each new Associate was presented. And last but not least, the sharing of a Cuppa Tea and of course sandwiches and scones. We had come together in celebration of our commitment as people of Mercy. Our commitment as Mercy Associates! Our commitment to continuing the work of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, whose example we carry in the Mercy we show and share with others.

The build up to this very special occasion commenced some three years back, when the long-running Mercy Associates group in Toronto decided to cease meeting. This original group had been running for over 25 years and I had commenced my association with this group some 18 years ago when I moved into the area from Wingham. The Sisters of Mercy, in particular Sisters Heather and Dorothy who at the time resided at the house, and the many women I was privileged to encounter over these years, were the inspiration for me to commence the gathering of a new group of Mercy Associates.

God had put it on my heart to encourage other women and in particular young women to come to this sacred space that I had gained so much love and mercy from. And with the support of Sr Anne Ryan rsm who was the Program Coordinator at the Toronto Mercy House, the journey to build our group began in 2015 and meetings were held on Saturday mornings every two months to allow working women to participate.

For the first few gatherings I presented a morning of reflection, meditation, sharing and of course a Cuppa Tea. In mid-2016 with the guidance of Sr Anne Ryan rsm it was decided we would study/share on Sr Madeline Duckett's book – 'Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table'. It was during the sharing of Madeline's book over a 12 month period that these women were encouraged to consider and later commit to becoming Mercy Associates. The formation process began and was run over six evenings using the new resources from the Institute.

The Toronto Mercy Associates welcome their newest members: Catherine Cunningham, Michelle Clipsham, Bev McWilliam, Vicki Hancock, Linda Brown, Meagan Soley, Jamie Soley and Geraldine Cairns.

Shalom—Grace Soley



Apollo Bay Commitment Ceremony

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? was the opening hymn on Commitment Day for the Mercy Associates.

How apt that hymn seemed.

A group of six women were to renew their commitment to Catherine McAuley's vision of Mercy and Love and a woman in her 70's was to make a first commitment.

Her decision unfolded this way.

When Sister Margaret noticed the woman reading a brochure about Catherine McAuley, a quiet invitation was extended to attend the twice monthly meetings of the Mercy Associates. For over a year this woman was greatly encouraged by the down-to-earth Christian faith and mutual respect evident in these meetings.

Because Apollo Bay is a small town, careful observation revealed much about the genuineness of the Mercy Associates' lives. All the women lived out their faith practically, humbly and with good humour, caring for people who experienced difficulty. Their own poor health or family concerns didn't quench their Christian faith or desire to seek the highest good of others.

One ebullient, hospitable woman decorated cakes to surprise people having special celebrations or she gave them bunches of flowers. Another baked scones for Op Shop volunteers and shut-ins. Five sang with a small choir visiting elderly hospital residents. Several were members of the local St Vincent's conference and all volunteered with school, sporting, refugee, church or community groups. One senior Associate, regardless of illness, continued to make her bed (this sometimes took an hour), rather than taking someone away from their '*more important*' activities.

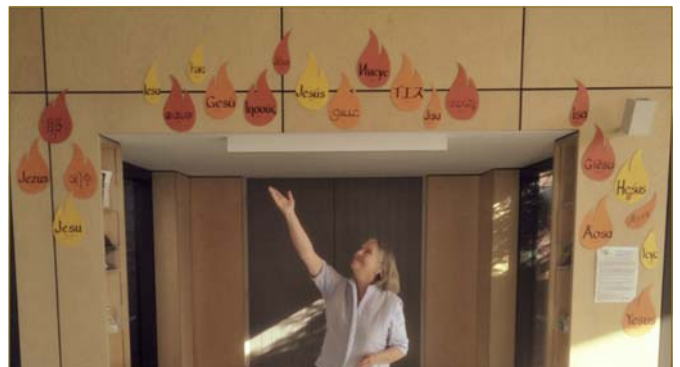
On Commitment Day in April, the Mercy Associates were called, one-by-one, to stand, to face their congregation with the new one placed in the centre. Sister Margaret and Sister Liz's faces glowed with encouragement as a first commitment was spoken and acknowledgement of hearing God's call was given. The others renewed their commitment firmly and clearly. The entire congregation sang Catherine McAuley's Prayer in loving support.

And after ... the kindly Ballarat Associates who travelled 2 ½ hours to be with us, our spouses, local friends, Sisters Margaret and Liz, plus Father Wally, all shared a meal at the Top Pub. It was as though Catherine and Jesus were seated at our table – and perhaps they were!

Eleanor Rowland

Flames of Pentecost...

Red, orange and yellow cardboard flames with the word 'Jesus' written in the script and language of people visiting Apollo Bay surrounded the entrance from the chapel into the Star-of-the-Sea Church. The flames were drawn and installed by Mercy Associate, Eleanor Rowland.



Young

The Young Mercy Associates began on 24th October 2011. We now have between 14 - 16 members who meet on the third Monday of the month for prayer, reflection and a cup of tea. The key ingredient is that we are deeply inspired by the life and charism of Catherine McAuley and seeking a deeper involvement with Mercy in our lives to find nourishment and encouragement in our Mercy Associates group – 'one Charism, many paths'.

Throughout the year we have donated to these causes: Young Hennessy Catholic College annual trip to Cambodia for the Mercy Orphanage, local families in need of finance, the Community Chest in Young, the Catholic Mission, also Catholic families from Young visited Nepal to donate quilts and we gave a donation, and lastly, we give to the local St Vinnies.

We are still fortunate to have present at our meetings several Mercy sisters who inspire our group to continue on.

At our May meeting Ann Murphy, one of our Associates, presented the group with a power point presentation of Catherine McAuley's life.

Christine Convery, the Mercy Associates Network Facilitator N.S.W. visits our group annually and is a guiding force for the group.

Blessings in Mercy, **Joy Cameron**

Townsville Mercy Associate writes history of local Sisters of Mercy

A new book 'An Ardent Desire to be United to God and to Serve the Poor, A Celebration of 100 Years of the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Townsville 1878-1978', written by Mercy Associate Joan Neal, was recently launched in Townsville.

The book launch brought together a crowd of 40 including Bishop Tim Harris, Gaye Lennon RSM, Helen White RSM, Joan and John Neal, Sisters of Mercy, representatives of St Patrick's College, the Mater Hospital and Mercy Community Services North Qld (MCSNQ), as well as friends of Joan and the Sisters.

Joan Neal gave thanks in her speech to the Sisters who contributed to this recording of history. She said:

"I am indebted to the Sisters who contributed to their story: Sister Cheryl Camp wrote Planting the Seeds around Cleveland Bay, Sister Benigna Desmond and Sister Aquinas preserved some of the story in the 1950s, Sister Marie Leonie Williams for the New Guinea story and her suggestions with the way the book is structured. Sister Annette Lowth spent many hours assisting and allowing me access to the archives. Sister Mary Raymond (Hammond) told me the wartime story must be told. Sister Marie Melville walked with me through difficult decisions – we decided 100 years was best. Sister Carmel Ruddick got the manuscript moving again in 2016, and Sister Anita Ready read and re-read and if I have errors in the story of the Irish sisters it is certainly my fault as Anita spent much time going over it with me. Sister Carmel King walked, lived and breathed the story and the photos with me for the last two years, I'm sorry Carmel is not able to be here today. Finally, Sister Ros Carr persuaded me to take this on – for it not to be a chatty local history, nor to be an academic exercise alone but to situate the story in the story of the church, North Queensland history and pioneering women. Thanks Ros."



Adapted from **Just Mercy**, March 2018

Flora, Timor Leste

Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.
(Mt 6:21)

Greetings to Mercy Associates and Friends.

From time to time, many of us have been inspired by someone. For me, such a person is one of our Mercy Associates in Aileu, Timor Leste. With Flora's gracious approval her story will be shared with you in this edition.

Flora Falcoa is a young 23 year old Timorese woman whose family consists of ten children, Flora being the ninth. The eighth child, her sister is deceased as also are her parents. Despite all the tragedy this family has endured they remain happy, close knit and faith-filled. However, another cross was thrust upon them.

One day in 2013 whilst Flora was at school attending her final year, she went to stand up but fell to the ground. With help she was raised to her feet but fell to the ground repeatedly. Flora was diagnosed with an acute muscle weakness. The ongoing support of her family, physiotherapy, acupuncture, and medication have not given her the desired cure. She is unable to sit and can only walk short distances. Flora stands or lies down. Just imagine the enormous setbacks this situation poses for a housebound young woman.

Where to from here? How does Flora cope? Flora has often shared with me where she seeks grounds for hope. In seeking hope she speaks of God's infinite riches, love, mercy and patience particularly in her sufferings. The beauty and wonder of God's riches in that the divine well is inexhaustible - a mystery that continues to captivate Flora. How is Flora's sound sense of God nurtured?

Travel is not an option for Flora but she has made a most important journey, the journey inwards. Journeying inwards in silence through both suffering and stillness has touched her life

with calmness, joy, acceptance and a great assurance of our merciful God's presence. Flora has found her TREASURE. She has a direction for her life.

During her senior years at school Flora felt she had a calling to religious life. Imagine the struggle and huge disappointment of yet another cross! Always wanting to move forward Flora asked God, 'Please show me another way'.

Flora began to express an interest in finding out about the Mercy Associates. Within a short time Flora had found her calling - to experience the charism of mercy and endeavour to seek and live this call in her everyday life.

Prayer is Flora's chosen ministry as a Mercy Associate and she invites anyone wishing her to pray for an intention to contact via my email (Flora is without an email) maryanne.dwyer@mercy.org.au

In conclusion, as a Mercy Associate in Timor Leste, Flora lives out this great gift of MERCY in a spirit of joy, radiating in a special way the Energy of God - her TREASURE.

Written by **Mary Anne Dwyer RSM**
in consultation with **Flora Falcoa**



Gladstone

Sr Maria Goretti, when she commenced formation for the Mercy Associates in Gladstone in 1992, asked us all to meet and reflect on each chapter in the book *'Praying with Catherine McAuley'* by Helen Marie Burns and Sheila Carney – part of the Companions for the Journey series.

Our group has limited resources and very limited access to Information Technology equipment, so in 2017, our Leader Annette Rowe chose to go back to this book for our teaching and prayer at the beginning of each gathering. At all gatherings, we have a guest speaker so they are present also, to hear of *'the Life of Catherine'*, as it is shared before their presentation begins.

We choose each Meditation in order from the book, with its particular theme. Someone with a strong voice then reads the story on Catherine's life followed by the Opening Prayer.



This year, we have included those Mercy moments where we have received or given Mercy to others, we call them our 'Wow' moments.

There have been some inspirational sharings and it has helped all to focus on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. To begin with, it was difficult for some to speak out but we are all growing in this gift of sharing.

In mercy and peace, **Annette Platt**

This year we have included those Mercy moments where we have received or given Mercy to others, we call them our 'Wow' moments

Griffith

In Griffith we are still having gatherings, but no one has committed to continuing to follow up with attendance. So many have sickness in family etc. I had two gatherings one in afternoon & one at night. Eight women attended in the last two days. As well as a short DVD on Catherine we had one on the reflection process and prayed some Holy Spirit prayers and then continued discussion about how the group might join some of the ministries that Sr Tricia and myself are involved in here in Griffith.



Sr Theresa Foley rsm

Judy Melville, Cecilia Johnson Aileen Reginato

Bathurst

Following the death in April of our Mercy Associate Member Jane Heathershaw, a memorable Mass was Celebrated for the repose of her soul in the Chapel at Rahamim Ecological Centre by Fr. Paul Devitt, Dean of the Cathedral of St. Michael & John's. Jane was not only a member of Bathurst Mercy Associates but at one time a Eucharist Minister, a member of a Parish Family Group over many years. She attended the Cosmology Sessions at Rahamim along with the 'Green Drinks' of the Ecology Group once a month, had a particular interest in an art class and was a volunteer in setting up the re-established Library at St Joseph's Mount.

The various groups Jane was involved with shared their Prayers of the Faithful at the Mass. As previously reported in Many Paths, Jane gifted the ornate ends of the Memorial Seat which bears the names of the deceased members of Bathurst Mercy Associates and sits in the gardens of Rahamim. Following the Mass those present moved to the Memorial Seat where Fr. Paul blessed the plaque which had been added bearing Jane's name. Memories of Jane were shared over a cuppa she will be missed and remembered as an intelligent, entertaining, amusing and annoying friend.

Jacquin Hershel



Gunnedah

The Gunnedah group are very generous and energetic, wonderful members of the community. On the first Wednesday of the month after the anointing Mass, the Associates prepare morning tea for parishioners. It is always a great opportunity to catch up and celebrate birthdays with one of Eva Grace's legendary sponge cakes :)

Recently we helped raise funds to install a new kitchen in the parish hall building, constructed in 1876 as the town's first Catholic Church. Parish Priest Fr John McHugh was overwhelmed with the generous donation and a further donation from the Armidale Diocesan Investment Fund for a new hot water system. He expressed his thanks to the ADIF and the Mercy Associates who have supported not just parish events but also projects in the wider community, including the Rural Health Centre and the nursing home.

Our parish celebration of the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of our church is coming up in June and the Associates will again be behind the morning tea and sausage sizzle.

Marie Hobson

Above: The newly constructed kitchen. Below: St Joseph's Gunnedah PP Fr John McHugh accepting cheques from Mercy Associates Colleen Buttenshaw and Anne Brady to fund the new kitchen at the parish hall.



Keeping connected...

Many Paths is published on the ISMAPNG website, institute.mercy.org.au—click on 'Become Involved', then you'll see 'Mercy Associates' as one of the options. On the Mercy Associates screen you'll also see the Vision Statement and other items of interest.

If you would like to subscribe to the Institute's monthly newsletter *Just Mercy*, you can do this on the ISMAPNG website. Click 'News Centre' and the final item is 'Just Mercy'. On that screen you can sign up to receive this each month via email.

Tuart Hill, Perth

Our group has just had its annual Retreat Day at St Catherine's House of Hospitality. Most were able to be present, apart from a couple who were sick or had particular family commitments. We were delighted to have two of the Sisters with us, Srs Breda and Clare, who joined in the various segments of the day and also shared on some of the topics. Also we were fortunate to have Sr Elizabeth, who manages The House, to set up morning tea and lunch.

The theme of the retreat was based on the life and spirituality of Therese of Lisieux and entitled '*Loving Our Way into Holiness*'. We generally keep silence for the day, except for our shared lunch, which allows for some social interaction. I think the silence in between, so rare today, is enjoyed by the people.

We have two new people. One is continuing with preparation for commitment, through using the Formation Resource, through meeting with Sr Clare and myself and becoming familiar with Catherine's, and subsequently, the Mercy story. The other is hoping to prepare next year.

In the next few months we hope to have our fund-raising plan ready and will work at putting it into action. At present we are still looking at options and innovative ideas.

In June Sr Ailsa MacKinnon, the executive director of Mercy Works and her team will be visiting Perth. Great news for us! Our Associate Group is delighted to join with other groups involved in supporting Mercy Works to welcome them to the West and to hear their Mercy Works news.

Jan O'Connor



Mercy Associates Support Prayer for Children and their Families who are preparing for Sacraments of Initiation in St Mary's Parish, Young

Lord, we bring our prayer before You and ask for your continued blessing upon the children of our parish community who are being presented for the sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, Eucharist and confirmation. May their seed of faith be nurtured in the rich soil of St Mary's faith community.

Give to these children who are in our care and prayer your grace to be opened to, and energised in spirit, to experience your love for each of them through their journey of preparation and beyond.

Lord, we ask for a renewal of faith in family members who present their children for the sacraments of initiation, that their faith will continue to be energised and that they will respond to your call for them to be the first and foremost teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

May all children and their families participating in St Mary's parish-based sacramental programme continue to be encouraged by the support and prayers of their family in faith. May our witness in embracing the sacramental life of the Church be testimony for them to be drawn ever more closely to You by living out their faith through the sacraments beyond these early years of growth and formation.

We pray for all members of St Mary's faith community as we endeavour to reach out to those around us through prayer, hospitality, action and welcome.

In your name, Lord of Mercy, we place this prayer before You. Amen.



Townsville Mercy Associates hold Information Evening

A group of current and potential Mercy Associates met at the House of Prayer in Townsville on 22nd March to discuss the shape of the group in the future.

Following the Commitment ceremony held at the same location in February, Mercy Associates Executive Officer, Carmel Ross spoke to the group about the history of Mercy Associates around the world over the last thirty years, including the groups that have formed in Australia during that time. The Townsville group, which has members in distant locations as Winton, Proserpine, Collinsville and Bowen, is a long-standing group.

The history of the Townsville group was described by Marcia Chock Man. A particular point of interest was the badges – Marcia had retained her original Mercy Associates badge from over two decades ago, and now has the new badge presented across the Institute to Mercy Associates.



The meeting discussed the importance of the group moving to a model where Mercy Associates each took on roles to sustain the life of the group. The roles identified included maintaining the database of current and potential Mercy Associates, booking venues for future meetings, preparing a reflection and prayer for the meeting, and being vigilant in identifying and inviting



Louise Doolan, Joan Neal and Marcia Chock Man

others who might be interested in becoming Mercy Associates. The other task that will arise is that of facilitating the formation programme for those at the meeting who are interested in becoming a Mercy Associate.

The group is appreciative of the contribution made by Sr Carmel King over many years. They were also pleased to have the encouragement of three other Sisters who attended this meeting. The model of involvement for Sisters, where their role changes from leading to becoming a mentor, was discussed.

Those present, who were from Townsville, agreed to meet again in July. They will maintain contact with those from beyond Townsville who have expressed an interest in being a Mercy Associate.

*Reproduced from **Just Mercy**, April 2018*

How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?

The cup of salvation I will raise; I will call on the Lord's name.

Psalm 115:12