



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 7, November 2018

Welcome ...

We are soon to enter the season of Advent, a time where we have an unhelpful clash between the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas and the ‘retail season’ of long-lasting, indulgent, frantic Christmas shopping and post-Christmas sales. One of the important things about Christianity is that it sometimes (perhaps often) needs to be counter-cultural. Advent is intended to be a time of quiet reflection and prayer, anticipating the wonder of the event we celebrate at Christmas, the birth of Jesus, Son of God. Instead, so many of us wind up in a period of frenzied activity, buying gifts, attending social gatherings, organising Christmas lunches, etc. In the midst of this rush, we need to make a determined effort to set time aside for solitude, prayer and reflection. Otherwise we risk the situation where, as the saying goes, ‘we had the experience but missed the meaning...’ Few things in life hold more meaning than the Christmas event, so our focus needs to be fixed on our faith and the wonder of what lies before us.

A few weeks ago I spent some time with the Tuart Hill Mercy Associates group in Perth, facilitating a slightly early Advent seminar. We considered the beauty of Luke’s gospel in his first two chapters, describing the visit of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah to let him know Elizabeth would conceive John the Baptist; Gabriel’s visit to Mary to announce she would be the mother of the Son of God; the Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth to celebrate their pregnancies; the birth of John the Baptist; the birth of Jesus; and the presentation of each of these infants in the temple. Major events in salvation history recorded in a captivating manner. If you have some time to spend with Luke’s gospel over these coming weeks of Advent, Chapters 1 and 2 will lift your spirit to a place where you can enter the Christmas season with hope and joy in your heart.



These salvation events have been depicted in art for 2000 years, and continue to be interpreted and presented in new ways. You will find if you google any of these nativity-related events that dozens of images of paintings will appear. When you browse through them, you might find one or two that speak to you and engage your heart in the mystery and wonder of the birth of Jesus.

In this edition....

Many branches have sent in articles and photos—thank you! As well, the Mercy Associates Leadership Group met in Sydney earlier this month. Many things were discussed and a summary of this meeting is included. The folk at MercyWorks have contributed an article, and information about a gathering in 2019 in Cairns, hosted by Rahamim and the Mercy Ministries Far North Queensland is included as an attachment.

Our next *Many Paths* will be published in March 2019. In the meantime, savour the blessings of this period of Advent and Christmas. And, may 2019 be a time of happiness for you and those you love.

Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**



If the love of God really reigns in your heart, it will quickly show itself in the exterior.

Retreat instructions, p. 145

Mercy Associates Leadership Group

On the first weekend of November the Mercy Associates Leadership Group (MALG) met in Sydney. This group is appointed by the Institute Leadership Team, and for many of those in the current group, this was their first meeting. As we gathered on the Friday evening for dinner, we were joined by Sr Caroline Ryan and Sr Elizabeth Moloney from the Institute Leadership Team.

Gathering a group from around Australia and Papua New Guinea leads to a great deal of discussion and sharing of experiences from the groups represented. Gaye Lennon briefed the group on developments in professional standards, including an update on the new ISMAPNG Code of Conduct (*a draft was in the last edition of Many Paths*). In 2019, all groups will need to adopt this Code of Conduct and undertake some training in what it means in the initiatives of Mercy Associates groups.



At the MALG gathering: L-R standing: Annette Rowe (Gladstone); Grace Soley (Toronto); Anne O'Connell (Ballarat); Anne Pate (Network Facilitator, VIC); Sr Gaye Lennon (ILT); Ann Murphy (Young); Sr Philomena Waira (Yarapos); Joan Neal (Townsville); Christine Convery (Network Facilitator, NSW).

L-R seated: Jan O'Connor (Perth); Carmel Ross (Executive Officer).

Sr Ailsa McKinnon from Mercy Works called in to speak to the group, thanking Mercy Associates groups around Australia for their fund-raising efforts.

Ellen Geraghty, Anne Ferguson and Sr Anne MaGuire from the Mission Integration Unit also spent time with the MALG, discussing their role and seeking input about how the MIU can support Mercy Associates in their endeavours.

The Administration Handbook and Formation Resource were discussed, and amendments recommended.

The Terms of Reference for the MALG were reviewed, with recommendations for changes being forwarded to the ILT for consideration.

Ann Murphy, from Young, has also written about this gathering, on page 3.

A very worthwhile, productive meeting...

Carmel Ross, Executive Officer

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When you do something noble and beautiful and nobody notices, do not be sad. For the sun every morning is a beautiful spectacle and yet most of the audience still sleeps.

John Lennon



From a Mercy Associates Leadership Group member

On 2-4 November I was privileged to attend the Mercy Associates Leadership Group meeting in Sydney. We commenced with a lovely 'get to know you' dinner on Friday.

Gathering on Saturday we commenced at 9am with a reflection on the Magnificat led by Christine Convey. During the day we heard accounts from each of the members regarding their groups. It was helpful to hear of their diversity and various issues concerning the operation of the groups.

Of the many issues discussed the Code of Conduct was of particular interest to many. Also of interest was the input from the Network Facilitators, Chris Convey and Anne Pate, and their activities.

We had several guest presenters including representatives from the Mission Integration Unit team, which includes FLAME – Faith Life and Ministry Education. It was very encouraging to hear that there are resources available from this group for use by the Associates for their meetings. Another guest speaker was Ailsa McKinnon who spoke on MercyWorks, informing us of the many projects in which this agency is involved.

I found the weekend to be particularly helpful and enriching and I came away with a sense of excitement and encouragement for the future of Mercy Associates.

Thankyou to all who participated in the weekend and especially to Carmel and her team in organizing the meeting.

Ann Murphy, Young

Gladstone—a parable about marriage

Our Parish youth organised a family luncheon and concert on the lawns of Kalori Training Centre on the banks of the Boyne River on 14th October. All the groups in our Parish were invited to present an item based on '**Love Lives Here**'. Our Mercy Associates choose as our theme '*Married Love*'.

Annette Platt began our presentation with the song '*Circle of Mercy*'. She then shared:

Good afternoon everyone, we are here on behalf of the Mercy Associates. I would like to begin with a small excerpt from St. Paul's letter to the people of Corinth, which is as appropriate today as it was then and will be in the future.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. There are three things that last: faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love.

When young couples are planning their marriage ceremonies – many choose this letter from St Paul for their reading.

I would now like to read a short reflection. It is called:



A Story as Wet as Tears by Marge Peircy

Remember the princess who kissed the frog so he became a prince?

At first, they danced all weekend, toasted each other in the morning with coffee, with champagne at night and always with kisses.

Perhaps it was in bed after the first year had ground around that she noticed he had become cold with her. She had to sleep with a heating pad and down comforter. His manner grew increasingly chilly and damp when she entered a room. He spent his time in water sports, hydroponics, working on his insect collection.

Then in the third year, when she said to him one day, 'My dearest, are you taking your vitamin pills daily, you look quite green,' he leapt away from her.

Finally, on their fifth anniversary, she confronted him. 'My precious don't you love me anymore?' He replied 'Rivet, Rivet.'

Though courtship turns frogs into princes, marriage can turn them quietly back, if we are not careful.

We contacted 18 of our Associates and between us, we have been married **774 years**. No wonder there are a few frogs around...

Annette Rowe

MercyWorks Agricultural Skills Program gives hope to Youths in Papua New Guinea

Wokabout Wantaim Yut Program is an initiative undertaken by Mercy Works to empower youths to change their future. The program started in mid July 2017, with the Catholic youths from four parishes. A total of 50 young people participated in this farming project which involves onion production, from planting the bulbs to selling the produce at the markets.

Mercy Works worked closely with partner organisations to deliver the program aimed at increasing self-esteem and confidence of the youths, as well as providing a stable income, through learning a new skill and being responsible for the whole process.

The youths were taught the step-by-step process of managing bulb onions from nursery production to curing, packing and sale.

Although the path was challenging, the results have been very successful in enabling participants to become financially independent.

An equally important benefit is that these young people are taking ownership of the concepts they are learning. They are now able to stand on their own and utilize these newly acquired skills with confidence and hope for a brighter and more stable future.



Michael and Ken are two of the youths in the programme

ALL FRIENDS OF CATHERINE McAULEY—SISTERS, BOARD DIRECTORS, CO-WORKERS, ASSOCIATES

CLAIM YOUR DATE NOW for the

5th AUSTRALIAN CATHERINE McAULEY SYMPOSIUM

Catherine McAuley – Social Mystic

Presenter: Sister Mary Pat Garvin RSM

Mary Pat, a Sister of Mercy of the Americas, is much appreciated in the 'Mercy world' as an adult educator and leader whose great interest is the interplay of spirituality and psychology in the promotion of healthy and holy living. She has a doctorate in psychology from the Gregorian University where she taught for several years. More recently she has worked with sisters and Mercy colleagues and friends to explore the radical role of Catherine as a Social Mystic and what this offers us today in our own roles of Mercy service.

Parramatta (Sydney): Saturday March 9, 2019 [10.00 am - 3.30 pm]

Melbourne : Saturday, March 16, 2019 [10. 00 am - 3.30 pm]

Adelaide: Tuesday, March 19, 2019 [5.00 pm - 8.00 pm]

Brisbane: Saturday, March 23, 2019 [10 am - 3.30 pm]

Invitations with details of programme, venues in each city and rsvp will be sent out in late January, 2019

The CMCA Symposium is an initiative of the office of Vice-Postulator for the Canonisation of Catherine McAuley. It is funded and sponsored by the Leaders of the Mercy Congregations of Brisbane, North Sydney and Parramatta and the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Its purpose is to engage participants in exploring the relevance of Catherine's founding inspiration for our own time and place.

Mercy is not a precept, a rule or an idea. It is the fruit of personal encounter, a reality that springs up within us and between us.

Fr Phillip Marshall

Chris Convery's travels to NSW Mercy Associates groups...

Since the previous edition of *Many Paths* was published, Chris has visited three NSW groups: Gunnedah, Grafton and Caringbah. Her reports are heartening reading:

Gunnedah

It was again my pleasure to meet with the Gunnedah Mercy Associates group on Mercy Day! What good fortune to fall on the 24th September.

The group had their Commitment/Re-Commitment Ceremony on this special day, followed by morning tea and then their general meeting. Afterwards we enjoyed lunch as a group at the Gunnedah Services Club bistro.

I was again shown such warm hospitality with wonderful companionship.

Later in the day Sr Christine Billing rsm and I visited St Mary's Catholic College, Gunnedah, and met with one of the staff, who nurtures the College's Mercy spirituality. It was a short but successful meeting, with the intention of forming a Mercy Associates group from among the College staff.

It never ceases to amaze me how the Mercy Charism is nurtured and continues to grow in many of our Mercy places across NSW and beyond. How fortunate we are to have such wonderful Mercy Associates and Mercy Sisters as our mentors. May God continue to bless us as Mercy Associates, and our works of mercy, as we aspire to be 'the face of mercy' in our communities and across other places.



Grafton

It was my pleasure to meet with the Grafton Mercy Associates group on 19th September.

As a group we attended Mass at 8.45, followed by morning tea and a meeting in the Parish Centre. I was then treated to lunch at the Clock Tower Hotel Bistro. What a treat and such great hospitality!

The following morning, one of the Associates, Patty Hewitt, and I met with the principal and other staff of McAuley Catholic College, with the view to starting a Mercy Associates group in the College. We enjoyed our visit very much and were given a wonderful tour of the College, meeting some of the students and admiring the Mercy Reflection Garden (photo below).



The Value of 5 cents...

Patty Hewitt from Grafton wrote about an interesting and fruitful relationship she has formed with her local hairdresser:

'At my hairdresser's, conversation turned to 5 cent pieces. You could not buy much nowadays with them.

I mentioned that I saved mine to send to Mercy Works. Next visit my hairdresser presented me with a bottle of 5 cent pieces that had been collected by her fellow church-goers of a different Christian faith. I gave her the receipt given to me and gave her a copy of the BILUM magazine and suggested she send her next collection direct. She is now a regular friend of Mercy Works.'



Chris's travels, continued...

Caringbah

On Monday 19th November, I had the good fortune to be with the Caringbah Mercy Associates group in Sydney's South East. As it was their AGM, there were not as many in attendance as normal!

As with all AGMs those present felt that a good many do not attend as they think they may need to step up and take on a more active role for their group. However, the current Mercy Associates will remain at their posts. They are: Annette Smith (Secretary), Carolyn Marr (Assistant Secretary) and Robyn Wienholt (Treasurer). Sr Nance Cale rsm was also present at the AGM in her capacity as the group's mentor.

Four other Mercy Associates were in attendance. I found it very heartening that one of the Associates present shared with the group her thoughts on living without anxiety. Her sharing echoed Catherine's words we find in her own prayer *take from my heart all painful anxiety, let nothing sadden me but sin* We were all in awe of this wonderful, older lady, who shared so beautifully and with great humility.

One of the other Associates put her name forward as intending to be present at **our first NSW Mercy Associates gathering, 24 - 27 May 2019, at Douglas Park. We need more Associates from across NSW to join us. Please pray and think about attending this inaugural gathering and retreat. If you would like to receive further details, please contact me as soon as possible.**



Aileu (Timor Leste)

We do not have to move very far before we meet people who are estranged from family. The Mercy Associates, Aileu have just experienced one such occasion, whereby two sisters were brought together after being apart for sixteen years.

Domingas 25 and Euphrasia 20 have both been rejected by their mother and stepfather. Euphrasia was taken to her Grandmother when she was four years old. This wonderful lady taught her how to walk even though she has a severe disability. At about 12 years she began school. Whilst facing academic struggles along the way she has completed her Pre- Secondary National exams. Victor, (Mercy Associate) and teacher speaks so highly about the determination and courage she has displayed to reach this wonderful milestone. She has a strong desire to go to the Secondary College. What an inspiration?

On the other hand Domingas is not educated but her domestic skills are quite significant. She too has a walking disability and more severe than her sister. Domingas who lives in the same Community as myself has very fond memories of her father Gabriel who died many years ago.

When the sisters met last Saturday the most overwhelming sentiment came from Domingas. Euphrasia's face reminded her so much of her father. Domingas wept bitterly. Such a normal reaction from a young woman who still holds her father so close to her heart. Euphrasia has no recollection of her father.

The sisters' time together became less strained and they began to feel more at home with each other. When they meet again, I'm sure they'll have even more to share and enjoy with each other.

Our Mercy Associates have a true understanding of the Corporal Works of Mercy, the criterion for eternal life stated in Matt 25: 35 - 46. Can we not hear the voice of Jesus: 'When we welcome the stranger, we welcome Him.'

Mary Anne Dwyer rsm



Tuart Hill, Perth

It's hard to believe we are once again looking at Christmas and what has transpired over the year within our Mercy Associate Group, Tuart Hill WA.

While many of us acknowledge that the age factor has had an influence on the energy levels, we remain keen to engage in both our local works of mercy and to support Mercy Works in whatever way possible.

On the local scene, some of our musically talented group still practice regularly so that they can bring joy in this form to people in nursing homes. And we are working with some new initiatives regarding Mercy Works.

We had a lovely Re-commitment Day, enhanced by the presence of several Sisters. Their outstretched hands in blessing on us and on our commitment is always both encouraging and uplifting. We also had the great joy of welcoming a new Associate into our group. Of course, we also enjoyed a 'comfortable cuppa' following the ceremony.

We have two aspiring Associates and we hope to continue our recruiting campaign into the New Year.



Several of our group are volunteer workers at St Catherine's House of Hospitality in Tuart Hill. There is a lovely feeling of camaraderie among the workers and we enjoy helping the various groups.

One of our members, Maureen Allen, has recently moved to NSW. A very faithful Associate of many years we were extremely sorry to lose her, but we hope that she can find another Associate group once she settles down.

We were saddened too by the death of Mercy stalwart, Frank Matthews. No longer able to attend Associate gatherings and in his nineties, Frank continued to make beautiful toys which were sold at our fundraisers and thereby made

quite a contribution to Mercy Works.

Once again, our year has been blessed by the continued support of both Sr Clare and Sr Elizabeth. This is both appreciated and valued.

Jan O'Connor

Mercy International Good Cup of Tea

The International Good Cup of Tea Event was first held to support Mercy International Association on Friday 11/11/11. Held around the world, the aim was to celebrate the life and legacy of Catherine McAuley and to raise funds for the ongoing work of **Mercy International Association**. Now the event is held between 24 September (Mercy Day) and 12 December (Foundation Day) in communities, homes, schools, hospitals and ministry workplaces. **Anyone can host a Good Cup of Tea event.** Whether you raise \$10, \$100 or \$1000, you will be part of a worldwide event that really does make a difference.

What is the 2018 Mercy Good Cup of Tea Event for?

Funds raised at the year's Good Cup of Tea events will contribute to The **Sacred Garden Project**, the creation of a place of peace and tranquillity for all pilgrims. This will encompass a Remembering Space to reflect and renew, an upgrade of the



fountain and rill, the addition of a bronze globe - a symbol of the worldwide Mercy family, and an invitation 'to care for our common home'. The Memory wall will be renewed, displaying beautiful ceramic plaques with the art of Sr Clare Augustine Moore. An interactive Learning Area for groups to gather will separate the garden into two distinct spaces. To complement all of this, there will be trees and plantings, benches and lighting to foster an atmosphere of contemplation, rejuvenation and awareness.

How to organise your Good Cup of Tea Event

Decide on a Date: Choose a date that suits you between now and Foundation Day (12 December). Plan for a get together such as a community evening, a gathering with friends, a parish or workplace event. Why not use the occasion to have some special Mercy input such as a talk on Catherine, information about Mercy in the world today or a Mercy inspired prayer. Remember there are many suitable resources available on www.mercyworld.org.

For further information or enquiries contact goodcupoftea@mercyinternational.ie



Salvatore Dali: *The light shone out of the darkness*

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

John 1: 1-5; 14

Keeping Watch with the Shepherds in Bethlehem

When the Gospel of Luke recounts the Christmas story, it tells us that, when Jesus was born, shepherds were keeping watch in the night. What were they watching for in the dark? For more than for what might threaten their flocks. They were looking for light, for something to brighten their darkness.

John's Gospel makes this point. It doesn't give us a description of Mary and Joseph in a stable at Bethlehem. Instead it describes the coming of Jesus at Christmas in an image, a light shone in the darkness. Notice that John doesn't say that a light shone into the darkness, but that it shone in the darkness. That's an important distinction.

Christmas, Christ being born in our world, is very much about finding God inside of what's commonplace and inside even the darkness of sin, violence, war, greed, and the indifference that sometimes seem everywhere. Christmas is about light being seen inside of darkness.

And so one of the things that Christmas asks us to do is to imitate the shepherds in the Christmas story and keep watch, hoping to see 'light inside of darkness'. How do we do that?

Our Christian tradition has different ways of expressing it, but it's what Jesus meant when he told us to 'read the signs of the times' and what John of the Cross meant when he said that 'the language of God is the experience that God writes into our lives.' God is inside ordinary life and our job is to see God there.

Christmas speaks of childlikeness, wonder, innocence, joy, love, forgiveness, family, community, and giving. When we are in touch with these, we more easily see what's special inside of ordinary life. These make light shine in the darkness.

Sometimes, just as at the first Christmas, we see light in darkness most clearly in the face of a newborn, a baby, where innocence can still stun us into wonder and soften, for a while, the edges of our cynicism and hardness. That, in fact, is one of the main challenges of Christmas.

Like the shepherds we're asked to watch in the night and we're watching when, in our hearts, there is more wonder than familiarity, more childlike trust than cynicism, more love than indifference, more forgiveness than bitterness, more joy in our innocence than in our sophistication, and more focus on others than on ourselves.

Christmas is meant to soften the heart and it's that which sharpens the eyesight.



Louis Tiffany, *Arlington St Church, Boston*

Extracts from homily by Ron Rolheiser omi, December 18, 2005