



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 10, September 2019

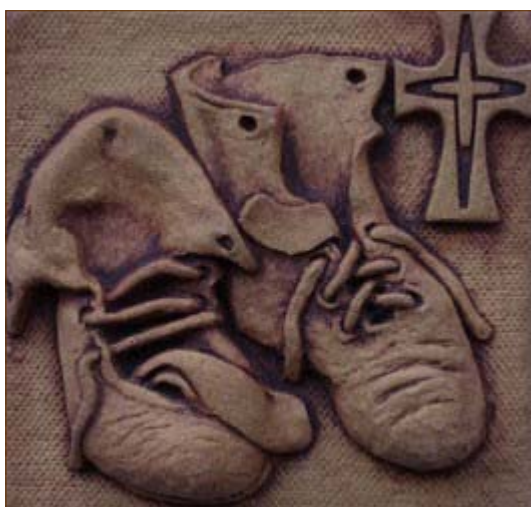
## Welcome ...

We are in the month of September. It's spring and the days are becoming longer and warmer. It's also the month in which we celebrate Mercy Day and Mercy Associates groups everywhere will be preparing for liturgies and the sharing of hospitality later this month.

Yesterdau, Christine Convery, Network Facilitator for NSW, began a road trip around regional NSW to visit many of the NSW groups. This is such an important part of Chris's role—connecting face to face with groups that might be a long way from the 'big smoke'. We'll hear of her travels in the November edition of **Many Paths**.

With the focus on our own commitment to Mercy this month, the article below provides a useful reflection resource. I hope you enjoy reading and pondering it.

Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**



## SHOE GAZING

Look down at your shoes. On her deathbed, Venerable Catherine McAuley made two requests. Her first directive, and best remembered by Mercy Associates and Sisters, was to be sure 'the Sisters have a comfortable cup of tea.' For her second directive, which sometimes gets forgotten in the retelling of her story, she asked that her worn and tattered boots be tossed into the fire and burned.

Probably embarrassed by her ragged boots, their wear is easily explained in her writing, 'Mercy is the principal path for those desirous of following Jesus Christ.' She knew this because she walked that path every day. In her shoes, she started a home (school, safe-space, hostel, half-way-house, etc.) on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland in

1827. Women who shared her vision ran the house. Eventually, this led to her founding the religious institute whose members would be called 'the walking nuns.' Set by her example, they walked among the people carrying out her mission of Mercy by serving all, especially the poor, sick, and uneducated.

As an Associate, you understand that you are compelled to walk this path in your home, at your work, within your community/charism which includes Sisters, Associates, and friends. May we share, grow, and sustain one another as we, like Christ and his disciples after the Ascension faced various changes, departures, and challenges with faith, hope, and love.

May your walking this path include prayer, reflection, service, and action. May you share your

gifts by being visible at events, service days, prayer groups, and memorials. It is my hope that all of us will continue to build community within Mercy Associates and between Associates and Sisters.

Now, look down at your shoes again. Being a Mercy Associate is a journey for which you'll need good shoes. Although, if you live out your commitment well, I suspect much like Catherine you'll need to toss them away after they have brought you to the people and places where you need to be present.

**Mark Piper**

**NACAR July 2019 Newsletter** (North American Conference of Associates and Religious)

*Image: Catherine's boots, at Catherine McAuley College, Beaudesert, Qld.*



**MERCY**  
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

**One Charism, Many Paths**



*To obtain recollection,  
we must entertain a  
great love for silence*

# WELCOME TO THE MISSION INTEGRATION UNIT

Dear Mercy Associates,

As you are probably aware, the work of ISMAPNG and its ministries is supported by a range of in-house services, provided by staff across areas as diverse as legal, finance, property and administration.

One year ago, a new unit was established to sit alongside these other support services - the Mission Integration Unit. This unit exists to:

- ◆ Nurture all who work with ISMAPNG and its ministries in the Mercy charism
- ◆ Facilitate interconnection within and across ISMAPNG and its ministries, and the Mercy world
- ◆ Build capacity for the future.

It has taken some time to find the best configuration for the Mission Integration Unit, so that it, and the individuals and groups who are a part of it, are able to do their best work – both individually and together. With this goal in mind, after some discernment it was decided that from 1 July 2019 the unit would comprise the following groups:

- ◆ **Faith, Life and Ministry Education (FLAME) and Governance Formation**

These two intertwined areas of work, led by Carole Gan (FLAME, based in Sydney) and Annette Schneider rsm (Governance Formation, based in Melbourne), share responsibility for the development and implementation of a single formation program for ISMAPNG and its ministries. Annette's work focusses on the formation of ISMAPNG's ministry boards, while Carole has overall responsibility for formation across all cohorts – including the Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage, orientation of new staff, and ongoing formation opportunities.

- ◆ **Environmental Sustainability**

This area is responsible for nurturing ISMAPNG's practice of the 8<sup>th</sup> spiritual and corporal works of mercy, care for our common home. Led by Chris Hill (Brisbane), this work area is one of the longest-established of those which fall within the Mission Integration Unit. As a result, Chris has made headway on a number of significant initiatives, including the development of an environmental management plan for ISMAPNG, and the installation of solar panels across a number of ISMAPNG properties. We are now looking to broaden this area of work so that it encompasses an education and engagement program which is fully integrated with the work of FLAME and Governance Formation.

- ◆ **Ministry Animation**

Ministry Animation (Sydney) has oversight of a number of programs and initiatives, including:

- ◇ Providing support to Sisters of Mercy in active ministry



*Carole Gan, Sr Anne McGuire RSM and Ellen Geraghty*

who are not part of McAuley Ministries Limited

- ◇ Providing support to ISMAPNG's networks and groups (many of which are open to new members – you can learn more [here](#))
- ◇ Development of a strategic advocacy program for ISMAPNG
- ◇ Exploring new ministry opportunities
- ◇ The annual ISMAPNG Commissioning Ritual (save the date: the 2020 Commissioning ritual will be held at 12noon (AEDT), Thursday 6 February 2020 and will be live-streamed from McAuley Centre, Lewisham – additional details will be made available in due course)

- ◆ **Young Mercy Links**

Young Mercy Links is a developing national network of local groups of people aged 18-30 who wish to gather together for ongoing formation, volunteer work, and leadership development in the tradition of mercy. We currently have two groups – one in Melbourne, and one in South Australia – and are looking for opportunities to grow this network. You can learn more about Young Mercy Links [here](#).

- ◆ **Mercy Associates**

I am delighted to welcome you all to the Mission Integration Unit – a change which I hope will prove a mutually enriching one. Among other things, I hope this will enable greater access by Mercy Associates to opportunities from ISMAPNG and the broader Mercy World; and that the Mercy Associates will be further enlivened by the opportunities the Mission Integration Unit has to raise awareness of the Mercy Associates and the rich opportunities you provide for living mercy in the world today.

If you have any questions about this change, please do not hesitate to contact Carmel Ross or myself.

Kind regards,

**Ellen Geraghty, Director, Mission Integration**

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## GRIFFITH MERCY ASSOCIATES HOLDS INAUGURAL COMMITMENT CEREMONY

Four women in Griffith recently made their commitment as Mercy Associates in the Marian Secondary College chapel. They are as follows:

- Maureen Burley who was a former staff member of the College
- Dawn McIntyre, a woman whose children went to our Catholic schools.
- Odette Dotter who is fairly new to Griffith and helps Theresa with all manner of I.T.
- Margaret Polegato who taught with our Sisters at St Pat's Primary.

Sr Carolyn Nolan received the commitment and gave the women their certificates and badges. Later a 'comfortable cup of tea' was shared in Theresa's unit together with Tricia. Thanks to Carolyn who combined the ceremony with a few days 'relaxing' in beautiful Griffith.

Marian College was most hospitable to our group and we were welcomed by Heath Neville, Deputy Principal and former pupil. Marian College is most welcoming to Tricia and myself. A tribute to the ministry of our Sisters who taught at Marian over the years.

Next in store for the group is a visit by Sr Therese and the four Associates to Young to meet with the larger group there. While with the group in Young, they will complete the Safeguarding training (during Chris Convery's visit), followed by dinner at the club with the group.



*L to R: Maureen Burley, Dawn McIntyre, Odette Dotter and Margaret Polegato*

*Dawn McIntyre, Sr Carolyn Nolan, Sr Theresa Foley, Margaret Polegato (Seated), Sr Tricia Johnson, Odette Dotter and Maureen Burley.*



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*I used to think mercy meant showing kindness to someone who didn't deserve it, as if only the recipient defined the act. The girl in between has learned that mercy is defined by its giver. Our flaws are obvious, yet we are loved and able to love, if we choose, because there is that bit of the divine still smouldering in us.*

*Susan Meissner, The Shape of Mercy*

## FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

On January 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, a volcano on Kadovar Island (East Sepik Province) became active. This volcanic activity affected 736 Kadovar islanders and prompted their immediate evacuation to neighbouring Blup Blup Island. An aerial assessment observed lava flow on the island with an estimated 50-60 per cent of the island covered in lava.

Kadovar is a small island belonging to the cluster of islands referred to as Schouten Islands. It is approximately 100km from Wewak (line of sight) and 24km to nearest point on mainland East Sepik Province.

The Provincial Government evacuated Kadovar islanders to mainland East Sepik Province In mid-January 2018. The location for temporary resettlement was identified as Dan Dan, east of Wewak Town. The care centre occupies a flat area in a small bay surrounded by large hills that is approximately 3.2 hectares in size.

The PNG Government identified up to 557 people who were resettled at Dan Dan Care Centre, 46% of whom are children. These people, referred to as 'internally displaced persons' are from five community groups, the villages of Manot, Taragauo, Dong Sarakbano, Niukatnam and Rumgio, with a total of 145 families.

The Dan Dan Care Centre was initially intended to provide a home for the Kadovar islanders for about six months, while the PNG government made arrangements for a permanent location for the five communities where permanent homes and infrastructure could be built. Unfortunately, eighteen months after their island home was devastated by the volcano eruption, the Kadovar island people remain resident at Dan Dan.

Sr Philomena Waira, along with Srs Schola and Emma and some Mercy Friends have made visits to Dan Dan Care Centre. Some details and photos are presented at right.

*(information gathered from reports by the PNG government and aid agencies Red Cross, Red Crescent, Oxfam, Save the Children and the UN Office of Migration).*

**The Province of East Sepik and the town of Wewak, near Dan Dan Care Centre, are marked on the map below.**



On Saturday the 7th of September three of us, the Sisters Emma, Schola and I, we went with some of our Mercy Friends members to the Dan Dan Care Centre and visited them. The Care Centre is here in Wewak, East Sepik Province. They have so many problems such as not enough food to eat, no proper house, no medical supplies and no stationery for school children.

The Mercy Friends have been visiting the Care Centre about three times now with some foods and clothes.

**Sr Philomena Waira RSM**





## RETREAT EXPERIENCE FOR ROCKHAMPTON AND GLADSTONE ASSOCIATES

On Saturday, 27 July, I joined a mixed group of Associates, Josephites, Presentations, and Mercies from Rockhampton and Gladstone for a retreat, titled 'I have called you by your Name' facilitated by Dr. Caroline Thompson, Mercy Partners Director of Formation. From the beginning, the format was interesting and challenged our real-life understandings and lived experiences over special themes.

We are known to God by our Name, it is important that we appreciate that. Who is being called by God? We are quite different people in different times of the day, the year. How grateful are we for the many blessings that our God gifts us with? Do we acknowledge and even recognise them? In

times when we lack motivation do we approach God with 'a beggars bowl' asking God to fill it for us? What are the dreams we carry for ourselves, our families. Give thanks to the Divine Dreamer who fills us with passion and hope. We all have a cup of suffering, let us place our hurts and difficulties into it and also remember those who need our forgiveness. Let us fill our hearts with gratitude for our family, friends and colleagues and all the places, people, and beliefs that nurture us.

A very special occasion to have a ponder about ourselves and how we appreciate the blessings in our life and the wonderful gift we have of 'Knowing, Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Del Rowan, Rockhampton



## A DESCRIPTION OF A WOMAN OF MERCY

Mercy is a woman of indeterminate age and remarkable appearance.

She is not fussy about the company she keeps, and tends to be full of excuses for her friends, having seen life from their angle.

Her heart, like her pockets, is capacious. She has a voice rich in tender understanding but is at her best in silence when she sits alongside the grief stricken and the guilty and their sorrow seeps into her soul.

Curiously, she sees herself reflected in the eyes of both murderer and victim, so sits not in judgment but companionably. She is a subtle teacher.

She makes strong cups of tea, cup after cup. Her hands are worn by work but eagerly sought by the dying. Her feet are calloused from the long roads trudged with refugee and beggar. She is an endurer of all horrors.

Mercy has a face wrinkled with kindness and worn by cost of living, but even in hovels she has been given to laughter and awareness of simple pleasures.

She has a store of lore and wisdom but is never heard to complain that she has heard any story a hundred times before, believing each teller to be entitled to a hearing as if to the one and only.

Mercy is a lady comfortable to be with—the safest and the soundest—blessed in her being with the indisputable reality that she is a true daughter, in manner and mind of the Maker of the universe.

— from 'The Many Faces of Mercy,' Mary Wickham, RSM



## GLADSTONE ASSOCIATES VISIT WOORABINDA

In June, in response to our Bishop's call to support the outlying communities of our Diocese, the Gladstone Associates visited the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda, some 270kms away and a three-hour drive west from Gladstone. The town of Woorabinda is located in Central Queensland, with a population of 962. It is situated on the traditional lands of the Wadja Wadja/Yungulu Aboriginal people.

Three of our Associates Cheryle, Annette and myself said we would love to go. I asked my husband Jim to drive and Fr Simeon [young priest from Nigeria assisting in our Parish] came along too. We departed on Sunday morning about 7am and arrived at Woorabinda at 10am. After meeting with our lovely hostess Sr Cecilia Prest (*pictured at right*), we had a welcome cup of tea.



The visiting priest, who travels the Western District of the Rockhampton Diocese, came to celebrate Mass. Annette and I were invited to 'Proclaim the Word'. It was a great privilege to be able to help in this special way. The congregation consisted of a beautiful lady who had been Annette's mentor and supervisor when she worked there, four small children as well as Sister, our two priests and us – a small but very blessed gathering.

After Mass, we had lunch, sharing the food we had taken with all present – Fr Simeon invited the youth passing by to come and share with us. It was like the Parable of the 'loaves and fishes.' Our small offering for lunch, just seemed to go on and on and there was still some left for Sr Cecilia to take to the elderly single men of the community.

After saying our goodbyes to these proud Indigenous people, we left about 1.30pm, driving the long drive home. A wonderful day was had by all and we were very fortunate to drive out there and back safely. We had Fr Simeon back in time to celebrate 6pm Mass. I cannot speak for the others who came on this journey, but I felt then and I still do now, that I was privileged and blessed in a very special way that day.

Bernice Billings, Gladstone

## A NOVENA TO PREPARE FOR MERCY DAY...



Recently, the ILT asked Sr Mary Wickham (South B) to prepare a Novena for the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy (Mercy Day).

In response, I am pleased to share with you this lovely set of prayers and reflections from Sr Mary, included as a separate attachment to this edition of *Many Paths*.

Novenas have formed part of the Christian tradition since at least the third century. They consist of focussed prayer over nine successive days. The aim of this Novena is to prepare for Mercy Day (24 September). Instructions on how to participate in the Novena are contained on the first page. The Novena should be commenced on Sunday, 15 September.

John Rochester, ISMAPNG Communications

### Safeguarding for Mercy Associates—the ISMAPNG Code of Conduct

#### Code of Conduct Commitments

1. I commit to behaving respectfully, justly, honestly and with integrity.
2. I commit to creating a supportive, safe and caring environment.
3. I commit to safeguarding all people, particularly children and vulnerable people.



## PROVIDENCE MERCY ASSOCIATES GROUP CLOSES

From small beginnings in 2002 in a town house in Wickham, Providence Mercy Associates saw themselves called by God, and Catherine McAuley to follow a path of Mercy, *the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ*. Three or four times every year, Providence set aside special times of prayer and reflection, learning Catherine's extraordinary story and unlocking meanings in the life of Jesus, through scripture explorations.

Formal Retreat days saw the Associates commit themselves anew to Catherine's call to live out *great tenderness in all things*, to commit themselves to prayer and action, trusting always in the providence of God. Many times special guests were invited to share some aspect of Mercy, or their life experience as a Sister of Mercy.

Every fortnight we gathered for an afternoon of prayer and reflection with Srs. Moya and Val opening the doors of this precious time for others to join us. Just before her death, Catherine said, *will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup of tea when I am gone and to comfort one another*. Providence Associates chose a small cup and saucer badge as their symbol in honour of Catherine's gift of hospitality. Many an afternoon tea was spent with joy and laughter in such hospitable Mercy company!"

Val O'Hara RSM

It was a sad day to gather for our last prayer gathering on Friday, 23rd August. However, some of these past Mercy Associates will gather from time to time for a social gathering. And of course there will be Mercy Day to celebrate by attending Mass at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Hamilton with one another.

Of course we celebrated our time as a Mercy Associates group by enjoying a shared lunch after our Closing Ceremony. Many fond memories were shared and there was much to celebrate!

It was wonderful that so many of the local Newcastle Sisters of Mercy could be with us, and share in a *comfortable cup of tea*.

Christine Convery



Mercy and forgiveness must be free and unmerited to the wrongdoer. If the wrongdoer has to do something to merit it, then it isn't mercy, but forgiveness **always** comes at a cost to the one granting the forgiveness.

Timothy J. Keller,  
**The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith**



## REMEMBER, YOU ARE A GIFT...

At our upcoming Mercy Day Mass, Sr Beryl Amedee will welcome our two new Associates and accept the Re-commitment of Associates for three years. Due to our 'maturing' community, many of our Associates live out on a daily basis with family and those they meet, what Ignatian writer, Vinita Hampton Wright, wrote: *We are all richly gifted to share our lives and bless one another. We do not ALL have to be baking cakes or attending meetings, BUT:*

*You can offer the gift of experience – all you have learned by doing, and some things you've learned the hard way.*

*You can offer the gift of listening – whether or not you have anything to say.*

*You can offer the gift of creativity – whatever you do well and joyfully.*

*You can offer the gift of silence – when the world is crazy with noise.*

*You can offer the gift of words – when others need to hear hope and common sense.*

*You can offer the gift of your presence – when someone else needs a person close by.*

*You can offer the gift of your witness – when a story needs to be remembered and told.*

*You can offer the gift of forgiveness – when there's no way a person can make up for what's happened.*

*You can offer the gift of hospitality – because everyone needs to sit down to a good meal and a comfy bed.*

*You can offer the gift of laughter – because the world needs a lot of that.*

*You can offer the gift of prayer – because the world needs that even more.*

*The world needs kindness. Here I am, Lord. Send me.*

you are  
a gift...

Annette Platt, Gladstone

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## PHOTOGRAPHY CONNECT DAY A GREAT SUCCESS FOR MERCY CONNECT—AN INITIATIVE OF MERCY WORKS

**Mercy Connect**, the mentoring program run by **Mercy Works** in over 100 schools, aims to assist refugee students adjust to school in Australia. A Photography Connect Day was organised in May this year to improve the experience of young refugee women in settling into life in their new homeland. Female Mercy Connect students at St Agnes Catholic High School in Sydney's western suburbs came together with students from the Mercy all-girls school, Monte Sant'Angelo in North Sydney.

Drawing numbers from a hat to pair the girls, they then headed off into the bustling streets of Parramatta to explore the surrounds by taking photos with their mobile phones. This shared activity created a bond that had them talking from the start and engaging in conversation like they had known each other for years.

In August, the students met again to create a book from the outstanding images they had captured together. The group selected those for inclusion in the photobook that best represented the story the girls were aiming to tell. Although from different cultural backgrounds, the students made connections that are already growing into friendships, from which both groups are enjoying the benefits.

**Kingsley Edwards, Mercy Works**

