



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 8, March 2019

## Welcome ...

We've recently entered the season of Lent, a period of reflection on our personal progress as human beings, created by a God of love, and in what ways we have failed to live up to all God would want of us. In this edition of *Many Paths* a homily by Benedictine monk Laurence Freeman is included on the final page – you may find this helpful as a personal reflection resource, or you might want to share this at a meeting of your group.

## Who are you praying for?

Earlier this week, an elderly Sister of Mercy, a dear and holy woman, entered eternal life. This is important to me because I thought very highly of her. It also is important because whenever we were in touch over the years, she assured me of her prayers. I am always heartened and reassured when someone tells me they will pray for me, and I'm grateful.

I am saddened by the death of Barty (aka Sr Mary Bartholomew McHugh rsm). I will miss her beautiful face, with clear blue eyes that communicated richly the extraordinary inner tranquillity she experienced through her deep faith in the God she loved and served for a lifetime.

I am also conscious that someone who prayed for me for many years is no longer part of this earthly life.

And then the obvious questions followed: Who am I praying for, near and far? Do I ever offer to pray for people when they need the reassurance of prayer? How do I decide who I will pray for? What situations in my life, in our nation, around the world, will I pray for?

As I finish off this edition of *Many Paths*, news of the brutal murder of 49 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch and the wounding of a similar number dominates all media. As New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern commented, people at prayer in their place of worship should be safe, yet these became the victims of unbridled hatred and terrorism. Without hesitation, we must all pray for those who died, those wounded, their families, their faith communities and all who are persecuted unjustly.

Prayer is one of the mysteries of our faith. We do not know, at all, how God gathers up our prayers for the good of the world. So we trust God with faith that, in the words of 14<sup>th</sup> century English mystic and abbess Julian of Norwich, '*all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.*' As we live through a period of such ugly human violence, we must maintain our faith and hope that the fundamental, God-given goodness of people will be the dominant disposition of life on earth.

And perhaps from time to time we should ask ourselves the questions above, in particular, **Who am I praying for?**

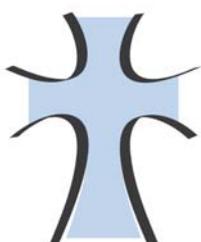
## Institute Leadership Team

Many of you will be aware of the sadness experienced across the Institute following the death of ILT Councilor, Sr Marie Duffy, in December. Marie was diagnosed with terminal cancer just four months before her death. She was a much loved and respected woman, full of faith and enthusiasm for life.

A new member of the ILT has been elected—**Maureen Sexton** (photo at right). Originally from Shepparton in rural Victoria, Maureen has worked for extended periods in Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, and is a member of the Mercy Works board. In commencing her new position, Maureen said, 'I hold all that has been with gratitude and say yes to all that will be in the future'.



Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**



**MERCY**  
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

**One Charism, Many Paths**



*Never be disheartened:  
God is good to us  
beyond expression.*

Letter to M Cecilia Maher

## From the Mission Integration Unit

*Dear Mercy Associates,*

The Mission Integration Unit is slowly getting up to speed. In this issue I thought I'd give you a few quick updates in the areas of Faith Life and Ministry Education (FLAME) and Ministry Animation – as the newest areas in the unit, we understand that they are of most interest to everyone at present!

We were saddened to lose Anne Ferguson from the role of FLAME Coordinator, and will shortly be recruiting again for this role – we invite you to keep an eye out for details of the role, which will be made available through [Just Mercy](#) as well as other channels. This will give you a greater sense of how FLAME itself will develop – and of course if you think you, or someone you know, would be a good fit for the role, we invite you to apply or to get in touch with us to discuss further.

Anne McGuire rsm, Ministry Animation Coordinator, recently helmed the 2019 Commissioning Ritual – a chance to commission Maureen Sexton, the new Institute Councillor, and all involved in Mercy ministry. The ritual was held in Lewisham (Sydney), and live-streamed across the Institute. We were delighted to receive [photos](#) from a number of locations showing groups who participated in the ritual from afar. If you would like to view the footage, you can do so [here](#).

We have a number of other initiatives currently in development, and look forward to sharing them with you in the days which are to come. In the meantime, if you would like to get in touch with us with questions about available resources or anything else, you can do so by emailing [missionintegration@ismapng.org.au](mailto:missionintegration@ismapng.org.au) or calling (02) 9564 2089.

With warmest wishes,

*Ellen Geraghty*

**Executive Leader Mission Integration**

## Rockhampton

The initial meeting for 2019, on February 2nd, was a multi-faceted one.

During Mass, Associates renewed their yearly commitment and five 'new' Associates were welcomed. The happy group of Bill and Carol McIver, Sally Clark, Kathleen Winter, Norma Loughan is shown here with our Chairperson, Ailsa McLaughlin (far left).

After a brief 'housekeeping' session and morning tea, Sr Beryl Amedee guided those present through 'The Code of Conduct' which applies when working in any aspect of Mercy Mission. Associates made a commitment to that code in a simple ritual.

This code could apply to all people of good will as it incor-

## CALLING ALL NSW MERCY ASSOCIATES

You're invited to our inaugural NSW Mercy Associates Groups Gathering and Retreat - **May 24 to 27**.

**Our retreat theme is DEEP LIVING IN MERCY**

The venue is St. Mary's Towers Retreat Centre, Douglas Park. 2569.

You may like to check out their website:-

<http://www.towersretreat.org.au>

The retreat fee is very reasonable for the three nights and four days, being just \$345.00 per person.

This fee includes use of all the retreat centre's facilities, comfortable accommodation and meals etc.

Please RSVP by 3<sup>rd</sup> May to **Christine Convery**.

Ph: 0414 627 226 or 02 4930 4021

Email: [mercypassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercypassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au)



porates the 'Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy'. Perhaps something for us all to ponder is - if we do not accept God's mercy, how can we be merciful to others?

**Jennifer Loscher**

## Caringbah—seminar by Ann-Maree O’Beirne rsm

On Monday, August 20, Sr Ann-Maree O’Beirne rsm shared with us some thoughts on her Doctoral thesis. She entitled the workshop ‘Graced Encounters of An Ecological Kind: Discovering the Presence of God in our Lives.’ The presentation began with a short, powerful video called ‘She’s Alive,’ presenting the earth as a living, breathing, beautiful organism, and the devastation that human activity is causing and honouring the lives of those who have died trying to make a difference. However, this was not the main focus of the presentation – it was just a backdrop or context of what Sr Ann-Maree wanted to share with us. She then proceeded to unpack the title – exploring what grace is and what graced encounters are using a Twentieth Century German Catholic Theologian, Karl Rahner’s understanding of grace and how we can experience God’s grace in the ordinary experiences



Grace is everywhere... everyone is graced by God.

of our daily lives. Karl Rahner said that ‘Grace is everywhere,’ and ‘Everyone is graced by God’ and he understood that grace is God’s Love.

Her work is looking at how God’s grace can be experienced particularly in the natural world, so she explored what ecology is – ‘a science that studies the relationships of organisms and their environment.’ And it places human beings as one of these organisms within this environment. She explained that ‘used in the context of Christian faith the term ecology has a focus on the interrelationships of the community of creation, including the role of the human community in the wider creation.’ Which is the focus of Pope Francis’ Encyclical ‘Laudato Si.’

She explained that in order to be aware of God’s grace we need to take time to stop to listen, to pray, to pay attention to God’s voice. Take time to honour, to cherish, to feel deep within us, God’s loving presence, God’s grace in our lives. Her presentation explored ways of doing that each day

just by noticing the moments of our lives when we feel uplifted or supported. We viewed a short video of how one photographer does this by ‘noticing’ the ‘Oh My God’ moments in the natural world. The images were beautiful. We were then invited to reflect on our own Oh My God moments, and we shared them with each other.

Her presentation then explored how God’s presence is often felt in the more difficult times in our lives when we feel vulnerable. She used another quote from Karl Rahner which highlighted this point very clearly. He said that ‘Wherever we hope against all hope; wherever we dare to love in a way that is too costly; wherever we believe in the light although everything is dark and in meaning although everything seems to be losing its meaning; we experience God’s radical Grace – the ‘Incomprehensible mystery of God.’ (Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments*, xiii) She then shared Sr Sally Bradley’s reflection on ‘Graced Vulnerability.’

Sr Ann-Maree’s presentation finished with a lovely video called ‘Gratitude’ by Louie Schwartzberg, she explained that when we take notice and become aware of God’s presence in our lives, often the feeling is gratitude. The video highlighted that very well.



*Gratitude is really a discipline.*

It is a call to be mindful of what is happening right in front of you. It is an awareness of someone else or of a kindness extended to you that deserves some kind of acknowledgement. When someone does something good to you, your heart resonates with a sense of the goodness that found its way to your heart.

**Barbara Smith, ASC**

## Townsville and the experience of large-scale flooding

February has been one like no other. The Mercy Associates meeting was cancelled as many were dealing with their own flood issues or assisting family, friends and complete strangers with shelter and basic essentials. Townsville received a year's worth of rainfall in nine days, with 1,134 millimetres recorded up until 9:00am on Monday 4 February and still the rain came. Most parts of the city were without power even in the non-flood areas and sewerage issues affected many.

Stories were told of the 1946 floods but most could not recall anything like this flood in their living memory. SES, the Armed services and Police through the Disaster Management Centre led by the Mayor, Jenny Hill have generally been praised by the community for an incredible rescue effort. Several members of our group have lost their houses or have had damage necessitating the evacuation of the house for up to six months. However, the journey is just beginning for many. While 3,300 houses were directly affected, many in the community have been touched by the disaster as they offer accommodation to friends, family and strangers, starting with a week, some now looking at sheltering others for six months or more as rentals are scarce. While love and caring is at the core, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the stress and tension of hosting others in your home long term while trying to maintain work, school and normal commitments.



The positives are definitely there, neighbour assisting neighbour, sharing of food, fuel, resources, generators and a generous giving of time. As the schools were closed, older students, including the boys from Abergowrie Catholic College in the Herbert Valley assisted in the clean-up. One of our members said she has been "surrounded by love" (she was evacuated from her own home and then again when her host family had to evacuate). Associates were saddened to learn of the death of Sr Mary Annette Lowth rsm this month. Sr Annette was much loved and respected as a teacher, Novice Mistress, Archivist and while her funeral was held in the inclement weather on 1 February, the burial service on 21 Feb saw a large gathering of family, Sisters and friends on a bright sunny day with Bishop Tim Harris officiating.

We have a number of friends in the group with a long Mercy association who may choose to journey to become associates this year. Hopefully our March meeting will assist in facilitating this.

**Joan Neal**

### Messages of support:

Sad and concerned for your flood situation. You are all in our thoughts and prayers: Love to all.

**Tuart Hill (Perth)**

In our Mercy Associates Prayer Ministry for March under the heading of 'Land of droughts and flooding plains' we are praying that all members of the communities affected by Queensland's flooding disaster will have the strength and support they need to deal with what confronts them. We will continue to hold those affected, especially Mercy Associates in our thoughts and prayers.

**Ballarat**

We continue to hold the Townsville community in our thoughts and prayers, as the big clean up job from the floods is underway. May our fellow Townsville Mercy family be supported and cared for by one another during this difficult time.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

**NSW Groups**

### Network Facilitator

#### contact details

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## Gladstone

2019 is a very exciting year for us as it is our time for Re-commitment and the welcoming of new Mercy Associates. We will continue to gather on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month following our Parish Anointing Mass in the Parish Hall. Our focus this year will be on all Associates reflecting on our Formation Resource – chapter by chapter. For those who joined the Pilgrimage to Dublin in 2016, Cpt 3 brought back incredible memories of the Prayer Services and Excursions they participated in. Those of us ‘oldies’ are enjoying revisiting the influences on Catherine’s life and how she challenged all those around her as well as exploring the way of living a more Merciful life.

The Associates will be very supportive and involved with the Farewell Celebration for the **Marist Fathers** from our Star of the Sea Parish after 118 years of service. This will be a sad year filled with many many wonderful memories and blessings. The main celebration will be held on the weekend of 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November – Feast of Christ the King.

Our prayer for all Sisters and Associates: *Through God’s Holy Spirit, may we be guided in peace towards the home prepared for us in your everlasting kingdom, through the way we share mercy and love with others.*

Annette Rowe

Sweet Mercy! Soothing, patient; soften the high and rears the fallen minds.

Knows with just rein and even hand, to guide between false fear and arbitrary pride.

Not easily provoked, she soon forgives; feels love for all and by a look relieves.

Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives, removes our anguish and transforms our lives;

Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even – **and opens in each heart a little heaven.**

M.C. McAuley September 24, 1828

We will organise Guest Speakers as required. We are looking forward to a visit from Sr Caroline Thompson from Mercy Partners in July. Once again, we will participate in Parish events, the first being our presentation of the Stations of the Cross during Lent of a Friday evening. We use the ‘*Station of the Cross Jubilee Year of Mercy*’ developed by the Archdiocese of Perth. These Stations allow us to share on ‘*Mercy as the heartbeat of Jesus’ life*’. It is also hoped that some of the us will travel to Rockhampton and join their group for a time of prayer and reflection.



### Mercy International Association has just released a new Vision Statement:

Deeply rooted in the Gospel and the legacy of Catherine McAuley, Mercy International Association seeks to gather the inspiration and energies of the Sisters of Mercy, our associates, colleagues and partners worldwide toward the creation of a Mercy Global Presence. Standing with the displaced, we will model a world of welcome and inclusion. Actively engaged in the protection of our Common Home, we will witness to the sacredness of all creation.

Through the work of the Association and through the longings and efforts of the entire Mercy family, we will strive for the globalization of compassion and the recognition of God’s mercy as present and active in our world.

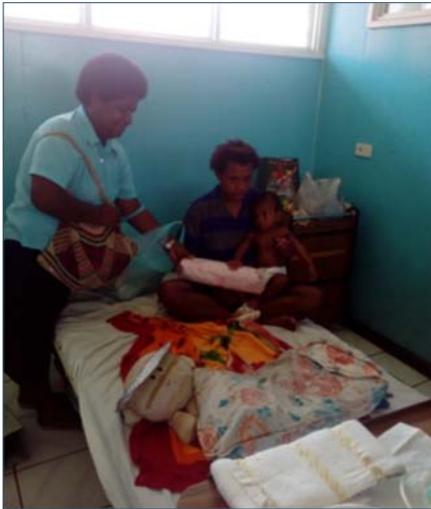
This vision keeps alive the Founding Spirit of Catherine among people of the World most in need of God’s compassion and Mercy.



## Christmas in Papua New Guinea

Mercy Associates in Wewak, Papua New Guinea, visited Boram General Hospital's Children's Ward on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Gifts were presented to all the children in the joy of Christmas.

*Rhonda Hikins giving a Christmas gift to a baby.*



*The surprise Christmas gift gave hope to this little boy and his father.*



*Sr Philomena Waira presented an egg to a little boy.*



### Wewak, Papua New Guinea

#### Reflections on Mama Catherine McAuley

I like to refer to the foundress of the Mercy Sisters as 'Mama Catherine McAuley' because of my devotion to her heart of Mercy (which I believe springs forth from the Heart of God), she is a mother who I am very close to in prayer and, a mother and friend I can never have in this life (just like the Blessed Virgin Mary).

I see Mama Catherine McAuley as a special person who was given a vision and a mission by God to show His Mercy to all peoples through works of mercy. Her story also tells of a woman whose life and work never ceased to attract the admiration of the ones who have, so that they too can start to give to the ones who do not have. She brought the poor and the most vulnerable to the rich so that the rich can relate to them in ways that only God can inspire.

Mama Catherine McAuley would invite young women into the Mercy House on Baggot in Dublin to learn basic skills that would eventually put them back on their feet in society. Most importantly, she passed on values through her words and actions. Some of the values were compassionate, industrious, responsible and devout, just to name a few. She made sure those young women viewed themselves as being women of value to themselves and society thus, creating in them a sense of purpose through being value

oriented. They became the values (compassionate, responsible, devout) that they practised. Mama Catherine McAuley helped instill values in each young woman so that each of them by God's grace could produce more values. In Matthew 25 verse 29 (The Parable of the Three Servants) "For to every person who has something, even more will be given...". The society upholds those who produce more values, because society cannot function without them - Luke 12 verse 48b "Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given."

Finally, one of my favourite quotes from Mama Catherine McAuley is "How quietly the Great God does all His mighty works". This quote reminds me that I can achieve great things by talking less of my plans and by constantly working in (with) prayer. The same heat of the sun is felt by the rich, the poor and the most vulnerable; and the same rain washes over the rich, the poor and the most vulnerable. A quiet reflection on the vision of God for Mama Catherine McAuley will help each one of us build a distinct bridge of continuous dialogue between the rich, the poor – and/or the most vulnerable.

It is not easy but Mama Catherine McAuley did it, so I know that I can to. What about you? Keep the Spirit of Mercy alive, God Bless you all.

**Gibson Maru**

*You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.*  
**John Bunyan**

## Mercy Works and Mercy Connect

The **Mercy Connect** Program is an initiative of Mercy Works that provides mentoring for secondary school students to help them settle into life and study in Australia. Each volunteer gets to know their student and understand their needs. It is through creating this connection that real, positive and lasting changes occur. Sr Flo Snell rsj is a mentor at St Joachim's Catholic Primary School at Lidcombe in Sydney. Every Wednesday during the school term last year, she mentored two sixth grade Sudanese students, Tito and Garang.

Garang and Tito both worked incredibly hard through the year, focusing on their studies with the help and guidance of their mentor. Sr Flo discovered they had a strong interest in cars, and came up with an idea that she thought would be exciting and inspirational for them. At the end of the 2018 school year, with the permission of the school principal, she organised for the boys to visit Prestige Motor House in Auburn. The owner of Prestige Motor House, Vittorio Giudice, greeted them took them on a guided tour of the car showroom. Much to the delight of the boys, they sat in the driver's seat of several luxury cars, including a Rolls Royce, Maserati, Lamborghini and the boys' favourite, a Ferrari. Garang and Tito then visited the workshop,

talking to the mechanics about how to become qualified as a mechanic and what it takes to have a job working on these prestige vehicles every day.

It was a truly extraordinary experience for these boys who will treasure this very special occasion for many years to come. They could not thank Mr Giudice enough and at the end of the day presented him with a gift of thanks to show their deep appreciation for his generosity.

Tito and Garang are now at secondary school. Their passion for cars has played a large part in forming an indelible link between them and their mentor, Sr Flo who is keenly watching their journey through the school system.



## Newcastle—Providence group

On October 26, 2018, the Mercy Associates group in Newcastle held their annual commitment/re-commitment Ceremony. We were blessed to have two new Mercy Associates make their commitment: Pam Tierney and Sheila Bell. We welcome them wholeheartedly. Unfortunately Sheila was unable to be present, however, her commitment was accepted on her behalf by Jane Walton.

Sisters Mary Geason, Val O'Hara, and Moya Lantry were with us and Sr. Mary, as Community Leader for Central B, presented the badges and certificates to our new Mercy Associates.

Petra Gustard, Sr. Mary's personal assistant, joined us for the first time. Petra is a lovely young lady and we look forward to seeing her again at our gatherings.

The Ceremony was very beautiful and included our favourite Mercy songs, The Circle of Mercy and Catherine's Suscipe, as well as David Haas' lovely Magnificat; and the reading of Psalm 103 was included.

Our first gathering for this year was on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February in the Mercy Services rooms at Tighes Hill in Newcastle.

Two of our Mercy Associates will be representing the group at the inaugural NSW Mercy Associates gathering and retreat in May. They are Suzanne Romani and Yvonne Purdon. We thank them for coming forward and committing to be our group's representatives. They are both looking forward to being present.

Blessings in God's Loving Mercy.

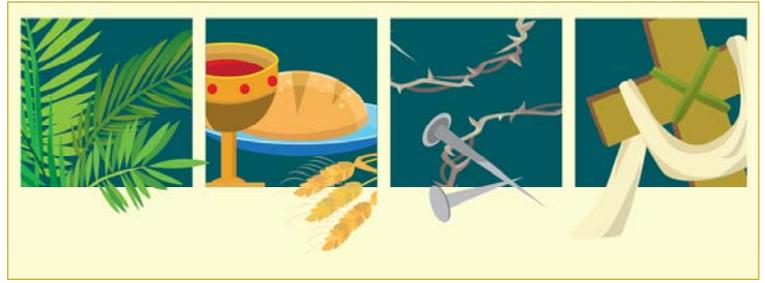
**Christine Convery**



## Lent Reflection 2019

I recently returned from the Holy Land. I was with a group of contemplative pilgrims from many countries who had different styles of expressing their faith; but they were unified by the common ground of the holy land and, even more, by the common ground of being that we touched together through silence in our daily meditation.

Israel is a small, intense country with as much variety in landscape – desert, green hills, vineyards, mountains – as in religious and political opinion. It has been a place of violent contention from the dawn of history. I felt if its conflicts were ever to be truly resolved the ever-divided city of Jerusalem – where King David built the temple, Jesus died and rose again and Mo-



ammed ascended to heaven – would instantly become the Heavenly Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation. We are assured there will be no need for any temple or religious activity in that transfigured place because God will be all in all. The ‘peace of Jerusalem’ would inaugurate the peace of the world, the transformation of swords into ploughshares as Isaiah imagined would happen one day. Until then we each choose whether we work for peace or increase divisions and violence.

This is a choice we are able to renew in the daily practice of Lent. We make the choice to be peaceful, not on the global but personal level, not through external action but through interior work. It should as Jesus says be a modest and ‘hidden’ work so that the ego has less occasion to hook on it. Whatever we ‘do for Lent’ is a sign of the synergy between the inner and outer dimensions of reality. Personally and collectively we are a microcosm. As we are so will our world be. Be calm and you will create calm. You may give up alcohol or candy or Netflix or gossip or checking your phone before you meditate in the morning. You may make the two meditation periods a non-negotiable part of your day or add an extra short meditation at

midday or read the daily gospel at the top of each of these reflections, or choose a book as your companion through the desert of the next forty days (you could do worse than [‘Sensing God’](#) which is designed for developing meditation this season of Lent). Perseverance and consistency work wonders in our state of mind and for the harmony of inner and outer: and because we are not perfect and not machines persever-

ance includes starting again when we fail.

These Lenten practices increasingly become sources of peace and delight as we try to be faithful to them. They are in fact among the simple, free pleasures of life – not burdens or bores. Through them, throughout Lent, we remember the virtues that are often downplayed or ridiculed in our culture – moderation, self-restraint, repetition, respect for our limitations. These are elements of universal, contemplative wisdom as we see in the Tao Te Ching: *Simplicity, patience, compassion are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world.*

Give up something and do something extra. This is the heart of healthy exercise, called **asceticism** in the spiritual vocabulary. The fruits of Lent will not appear if you try to force them or just by thinking about them. They bud and flower and fall subtly, surprisingly and therefore delightfully. This is a wonderful season.

**Laurence Freeman OSB**

Ash Wednesday: Mathew 6:1-6,16-18