



INSTITUTE OF  
**SISTERS of MERCY**  
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## Orientation to Mercy: Module 1 - the Story of Catherine McAuley



The Scriptural quotations used in this booklet are from the New Revised Standard Edition.

This formation resource has been developed for the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea for use by staff new to the Institute and its ministries.

# ABOUT ORIENTATION TO MERCY

The *Orientation to Mercy* program was originally designed for staff new to the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) and its incorporated ministries. The program is, however, also suitable for those for whom the mercy charism is a core component in their roles, including those from non-ISMAPNG ministries and schools with a Mercy heritage.

The *Orientation to Mercy* (self-paced) is a 7-module program, with each module designed to take about 30-40 minutes. The program was adapted from the one-day *Orientation to Mercy* seminars that were held face-to-face in early 2020. Whilst in-person seminars always bring an added dimension to education and formation, i.e., the ability to interact, network and share stories with the presenter and other participants, bringing people together physically is not always possible or feasible.

The seven topics covered in the Modules are;

- the story of Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, and the sources of inspiration for the work she did
- the early expansion of the Sisters of Mercy
- the *Works of Mercy*, their scriptural basis, and the traditional and contemporary manifestations of these.
- *Care for Our Common Home* (the 8th Work of Mercy) and the interconnectedness of the *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*
- The brief history of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea and the formation of ISMAPNG
- ISMAPNG's ministries
- The wider Mercy family & Mercy Values

Education and formation are not just about receiving input or even mentally processing what has been heard or read. It also involves some critical reflection on the resource material, engaging with it from the head, heart and spirit, being open to new insights. Ideally, formation also moves us into action. As such, each of the modules includes input, short activities and reflective questions.

At the start of each 30-40 minute module, there is a short video clip which provides information about the module. Within the body of the module, there are links to video clips and websites which relate to the focus of the module. There are also suggested short activities and reflective questions for consideration.

At the end of each module is a prayerful reflection. Central to being Catholic are the questions about the ways God is revealed through what we are seeing and hearing, how what we see and hear can strengthen our relationship with God, and the ways we are

invited to respond. If you are not Catholic or are unfamiliar with the Christian tradition of prayer and reflection, you are invited to take this time to think about the points in the module which have made an impact on you.

You will need online access whilst participating in this program as there are several links to video clips and websites to which you will be directed as key resource material.

It may also be useful to print out a copy of this document so that you are able to write down your responses to the reflective questions whilst engaging with the content. It is also hoped that the links contained will be useful as resources for further exploration.

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country in Melbourne, the *Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation* and in the inner west of Sydney, the *Gadigal and Wangai peoples of the Eora Nation*, (where the presenters taped the introductory video clips at the start of each module) and throughout Australia.

We acknowledge First Nations people throughout the world. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

# MODULE 1

## The Story of Catherine McAuley

Watch the Introduction to the *Orientation to Mercy* program and Module 1 video clip [here](#).

### Introduction to Module 1

In this module, we explore the story of Catherine McAuley, her life and the events that led to her founding the Sisters of Mercy. We reflect on what inspired and motivated her to do the things that she did.

The poor were everywhere on the streets of Dublin in the 1820s and 1830s. The wealthy, including those who lived in Baggot Street, may not have wanted these unfortunate people in their vicinity. Catherine McAuley, however, saw their potential...

### Opening Reflection

#### The Caterpillar

'Don't kill me!' Caterpillar said,  
As Charles had raised his heel  
Upon the humble worm to tread,  
As though it could not feel.  
  
'Don't kill me!' and I'll crawl away  
To hide awhile, and try  
To come and look, another day,  
More pleasing to your eye.  
  
'I know I'm now among the things  
Uncomely to your sight;  
But by and by on splendid wings  
You'll see me high and light!  
  
'And then, perhaps, you may be glad  
To watch me on the flower;  
And that you spared the worm you had  
To-day within your power!'

...

Hannah Flagg Gould

<https://discoverpoetry.com/poems/poems-about-mercy/>

... and it probably wouldn't even have entered Catherine's mind to harm the caterpillar, given her views on the sacredness of all of God's creation...



# MODULE 1

## The Story of Catherine McAuley

### The docudrama 'In God Alone'

To begin this Module, you are invited to view the docudrama on the life of Catherine McAuley at <https://www.mercyworld.org/film-in-god-alone/> (22 min 25 sec)

**Jot down some of the things that were significant or inspirational for you in this short film.**

**Were there any aspects of Catherine's life story which surprised you? If so, why?**

**What 'picture' of Catherine as a person are you developing in your mind?**

**If you met Catherine today, what question would you ask her? How do you think she might respond?**

# MODULE 1

## The Story of Catherine McAuley

### Prayerful Reflection<sup>1</sup>

Read the passage from Isaiah 45:1-5 below

*... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you... Do not fear, for I am with you...*

- ✚ Reflecting on the film, how was God showing Catherine that she was 'precious'?
- ✚ How did Catherine allow God to use her significant relationships to shape her journey?

Imagine God were in front of you, talking to you...

*... Do not fear, (say your name) for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, (say your name) you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... (say your name), you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you... (say your name), do not fear, for I am with you...*

- ✚ How is God showing you that you are 'precious'?
- ✚ What example of Catherine's might you be called to follow?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from  
Marie Gaudry, *With Catherine, my Spirit Mother*, (Sydney: Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, 2007), p. 21

## Notes