



INSTITUTE OF
SISTERS of MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Orientation to Mercy: Module 4 – the 8th Work of Mercy



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 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

Watch the Introduction to Module 4 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 4

In this module, we briefly explore the 8th Work of Mercy proposed by Pope Francis in 2016. We see how the Cry of the Earth invariably becomes intertwined with the Cry of the Poor.

Opening Reflection

Blessing

Blessed be mother earth
who nourishes and cares for her children.
Blessed be the fruits of earth
that I often take for granted.
Blessed be the eyes that see
what is truly happening around us.
Blessed be the heart of mercy
whose crack enables deeper seeing.
Blessed be the 'saving element'
hidden deep within despair
that can gently transform
all darkness into light

Madeline Duckett rsm,
Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table, p.72.

Catherine McAuley and the Earth

Whilst "ecology" would not be a term used during the time of Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), her understanding of the interconnectedness of all of God's creation, and our responsibilities as "strangers and pilgrims" traveling on this Earth, can be found in her writings and actions.

Mary Sullivan RSM explores some of these themes in *Catherine McAuley and Earth*, a reflection piece she wrote for the *Mercy International Reflection Process* in 2016. The reflection can be accessed via the link below.

https://www.mercyworld.org/f/45074/x/f64ce2790b/catherine-mcauley-and-eco-justice_a4.pdf

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

The 8th Work of Mercy: Care for our Common Home – 3 key dates

24 May 2015

Pope Francis promulgated his encyclical (a letter which deals with some aspect of Catholic teaching), *Laudato Si'* (Praise be to you): *On Care of Our Common Home*. Unlike other papal encyclicals which are normally addressed to a particular audience, e.g., bishops in a specific country, all clergy throughout the world, etc., Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si'* to "every person living on this planet".

The encyclical can be found at

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

8 December 2015 – 20 November 2016

On 13 March 2015, Pope Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which would run from 8 December that year till 20 November 2016.

I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (cf. Lk 6:36).

Pope Francis

A simple search of "jubilee year of mercy resources" on the internet will result in several excellent resources on the theme of "Mercy" created for this world-wide event.

1 September 2016

Pope Francis declared that in addition to the seven corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and eighth work, 'care for our common home' would be included both as a spiritual work, and as a corporal work.

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a 'grateful contemplation of God's world' which 'allows us to discover in each thing, a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.'

As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires 'simple daily gestures, which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness' and 'makes itself felt in every action that seeks a better world.'

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The 8th Work of Mercy

Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor

One of the key messages in *Laudato Si'* is that the degradation of the earth invariably affects the poor. When the earth suffers, it is the poor and marginalised who suffer first and the most. Recognition of this correlation between the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor is neither new nor championed only by Pope Francis.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 9 out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air, and more than 7 million people die from air pollution related causes every year. More than 90% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, followed by low- and middle-income countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region, Europe and the Americas.¹

According to water.org, a global non-profit organization working to bring water and sanitation to the world, 1 in 9 people around the world lack access to clean, reliable drinking water. The vast majority live in extreme poverty and children are often the hardest hit. Their growth is stunted because poor water quality inhibits their ability to absorb nutrients. Women are also disproportionately affected by lack of clean drinking water, because they are often forced to spend hours fetching water every day when communities lack safe taps.²

In wealthier countries, we don't usually eat spoilt or contaminated food and often throw out food even when it is edible. Legislation ensures that contaminated and spoilt food is recalled, preventing the contraction and spread of disease. According to WHO, contaminated food still affects 600 million people each year, killing 420,000 people. The vast majority of deaths from food poisoning occur in poorer nations, with children under the age of 5 accounting for 40% of all deaths. Apart from not being able to afford better food in the first place, the lack of regulation on food safety, industrial contaminants in the water used for crop irrigation, tropical weather allowing pests to flourish, food being improperly transported and handled, chemicals leaching into food supplies, and other reasons, poorer people are greatly disadvantaged.³

¹ World Health Organisation, *Air Pollution* https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1, accessed 8 December 2020

² Water.org, *Access to water turns poverty into possibility* <https://water.org/about-us/>, accessed 8 December 2020

³ Scientific American, *Contaminated Food Sickens 1 in 10 People Worldwide Each Year* <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/contaminated-food-sickens-1-in-10-people-worldwide-each-y>, accessed 8 December 2020

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The 8th Work of Mercy

View the short video clip *Sisters on the Planet: Carteret Islands* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XDHMgqIcEU> (8 min 18 sec)

In what ways do you see the Cry of the Earth intertwined with the Cry of the Poor?

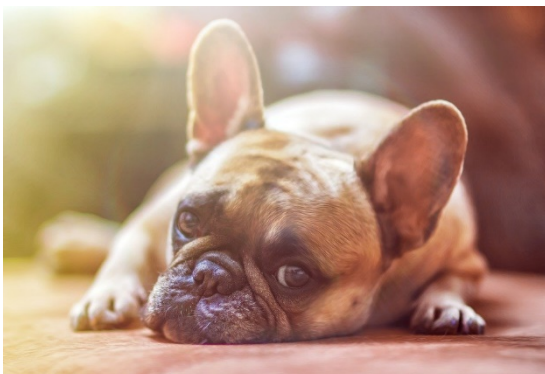
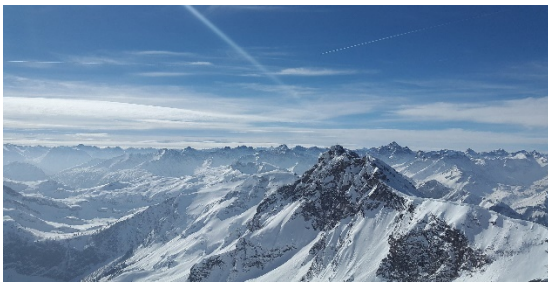
Gratefully Contemplating God's World

Reflect on the beauty of creation by contemplating the following images, other images that you might have or photographs of nature you have taken.



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View these 1-2 minute time-lapse videos from the World Economic Forum which focus on the human impact on the earth <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/5-videos-that-reveal-the-human-impact-on-earth/>

What response do you have to these clips? What stays with you?

Simple Daily Gestures

View this short video clip on some of the *Simple Daily Gestures* in which Sisters and staff of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea are engaged.
<https://vimeo.com/388938580> (5 min 05 sec)

What are some simple gestures that you can start doing where you live?

Find out how you can support the things your Mercy organization is doing to care better for the earth and its people.

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Prayerful Reflection

The *examen* or examination of conscience is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to identify or detect God's presence and direction for us. It is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

Anyone who takes time at the conclusion of each day to reflect on what was good about the day and what could have been done better is engaged in a similar practice, without perhaps naming it in 'religious language'.

You are invited to participate in the following examen led by Fr. Tom Regan, S.J

Laudato Si' - Examination of Conscience (8 min 10 sec)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5-5UFd5OxQ>

Notes