

WELCOME TO THE TRUSTEE DIRECTORS OF MERCY MINISTRIES COMPANIONS

May 25/26, 2021

Welcome to each and every one of you here to-day on this historic occasion.

Our gathering over these two days is not the official launching of Mercy Ministry Companions but it is the prior step, a very important step, the getting to know each other as ‘companions,’ Trustee Directors, members of the leadership team, sisters and colleagues. We are taking this step before you launch into the deep on a new journey as companions together to take the charism of Mercy forward into a new era. As Trustee Directors of MMC you are truly lay leaders of the Church. As baptized people you are being called not to lead only a Christian life but to be leaders in a much wider sphere, to take the gospel ever forward and deeper into the lives of people, as you reach out to the people in the many and varied ministries across Australia under the umbrella of Mercy.

As I reflected on our coming together to-day I noted that the Institute is not at a moment of ‘change,’ just substituting one mode of governance for another by taking this step. We are in a much deeper process of “Transformation.” This is a much slower, deeper and longer process that will take time. True transformation is never rushed; the building of relationships is never rushed. It has taken the sisters of the Institute many years to come to this point with

various transformations and variations of governance taking place along the way. Not always easy but focused on the greater good.

As we recall on many occasions the life of Catherine and her companions, they took a similar path of transformation both in identity and ministry. Taking Catherine as an example, Catherine was born into a Catholic family, and disorientation and change came with the death of her parents. In time she moved into a Quaker family. There her horizons broadened and her faith deepened. She grew strong, attentive and reflective, clear in how she wanted to live and share her faith. We see her determined, insightful, prayerful during many a crisis. With the varied strong foundations in her life these assisted her to be adaptable, focused on the needs of poor women at the time and gradually to other needs that emerged. From her own authenticity Catherine authorized and empowered young women to also be adaptable, creative, prayerful leaders and be a thorn in the side of church and society that was causing economic, religious, political, and educational poverty.

Over the past months we have invited you to join us on the Institute's journey of 'transformation.' We, sisters, colleagues and Trustees will walk together over the coming months, then we, the sisters will step back and entrust the many ministries that the sisters created from very small mustard seeds to the great ministries that they are today, to you.

As Trustee Directors, you have a very clear mandate, to continue to be people grounded in the gospel and charism of Mercy. This calls you to keep your eye and your ear on the pulse and the heart of each of the ministries and particularly on how the poorest, most disadvantaged person is benefitting or being disadvantaged by decisions that Board Directors and staff, governments or Church make through policies and services.

I am sure you will find yourself reflecting on many issues, but the essential questions will be - Are the ministries truly gospel focused? How will we know? How can we ensure they will be in 5, 10 years' time? What will need to be in place to guarantee this? How will we look beyond the present horizons of the ministries and find the 'cracks in the concrete' where people slip through without us noticing? Who are we not serving? Are we inclusive of everyone? How will Mercy Ministry Companions respond when dilemmas come our way? How will we integrate Pope Frances' call to Integral Ecology into our way of being and acting as Trustee Directors so that we not only serve people but are actively aware that the world is in the midst of a climate crisis and maybe our work practices are contributing to this? If these questions are not kept before you then, in time, Mercy Ministries Companions will become just another NGO, certainly not a unique Ministerial PJP coming from a truly gospel base.

So the challenge is before you. Your role is not only about ‘good governance’ which is extremely important. Your role involves a lot more. Your role is very specific and yet different in many ways to that of being a Director of a Board.

As expressed in Evangelii Gaudium #114. “The Church, (and more specifically for us the ministries of Mercy) must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.” This your mandate.

I know that as Trustee Directors you will ensure that these words are lived out, for I truly believe that the ministries of Mercy will be in good hands.

Enjoy these two days.

Eveline Crotty
15 May 2021