



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 17, June 2021

## Welcome to Many Paths

For some years now, Sisters of Mercy around the world have supported the cause to have Catherine McAuley canonised. Much hard work, accompanied by prayer, is needed when canonisation is proposed! This edition of *Many Paths* is longer than usual, because **Sr Caroline Ryan, RSM**, a member of the Institute Leadership Team, has contributed an article about canonisation and the particular work underway for **Catherine's canonisation**. It's a worthwhile read if you'd like to have a better **understanding** of how this important initiative is proceeding. It might also be fruitful material for formation at a meeting of your Mercy Associates group.

Also in this edition are some important reflection pieces. **Anne Pate** has written about **Pentecost** and the ways the gift of language can be used to build each other up.

**Marg Trevethan** has written about the **Vision Statement** and **Vision in Practice** that underpins our involvement as Mercy Associates.

**Dot Leech**, from Gladstone, has written a reflection on her many years of **volunteering**—something that is an im-

portant part of the lives of many Mercy Associates. And it's timely—we have just recently celebrated National Volunteers Week.

And a big 'thank you' to the **groups who have sent articles, photos and prayers** about their activities over the last few months. One of the benefits of being part of ISMAPNG is the opportunities Mercy Associates groups have now to share their stories with each other through this newsletter, regardless of where each group is located and how many Associates it has in it.

**National Reconciliation Week** has just concluded. This is a time when we especially reflect on the history of Australia since the colonisation of this nation and its impact on those who first called Australia 'home'. It's a time to consider our personal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to ensure respectful relationships are in place. It's also a time to celebrate the culture and contribution of First Nations peoples to this land.

**Carmel Ross, Executive Officer**

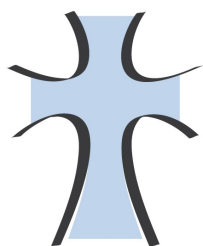
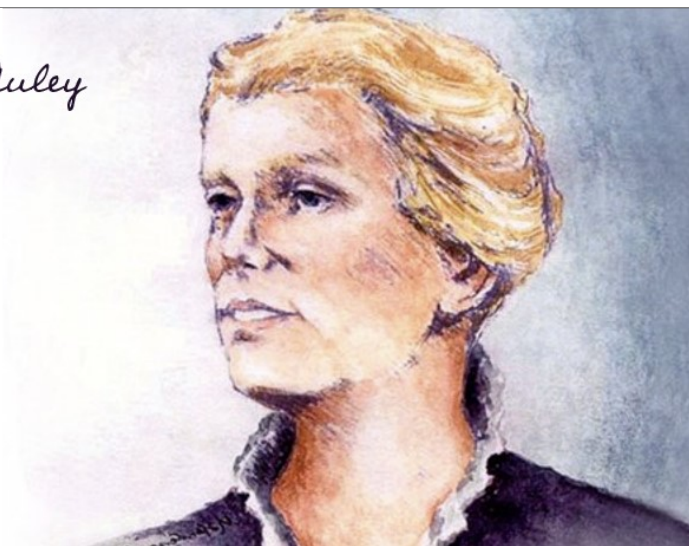
### *The Beatification of Catherine McAuley*

Loving God You chose Catherine McAuley  
for the service of your people who are Poor, Sick  
and Uneducated.

You inspired her to found the Sisters of Mercy  
so that these good works might endure.

Give to each of us a portion of her  
compassionate spirit and an ardent desire  
to serve your suffering people.

Graciously hear our prayers for Catherine and by  
granting the favours we ask through her intercession,  
hasten the day when her sanctity  
will be celebrated by all the Church. *Amen.*



**MERCY**  
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

**One Charism, Many Paths**



*We must address God  
as we would a dear  
friend to whom we owed  
a great deal...*

# VENERABLE CATHERINE McAULEY

## And a Few Thoughts about Canonisation

Caroline Ryan RSM

*God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden,  
can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14).  
Let us be renewed by God's mercy,  
let us be loved by Jesus,  
let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too;  
let us become agents of this mercy,  
channels through which God  
can water the earth, protect all creation and  
make justice and peace flourish.*

Easter Urbi et Orbi, March 31, 2013

It seems to me that these words of Pope Francis are central to his ministry of leadership. So often Francis teaches by word and action that God's mercy incarnated in Jesus excludes no-one; that it upholds the most vulnerable in the human community; that it has preferential care for the ones desperate for meaning-beyond-immediate-wants or disgraced by their own foolishness; that it embraces with special tenderness those of us burdened by our own fragilities.

I think that this message of Francis would truly have resonated with Catherine McAuley. As we know well, Catherine's life and her life's work gave robust testimony to God's mercy with its life-affirming gifts of compassion and justice, hope and healing, forgiveness and freedom.

Keeping in mind the vibrant understanding of God's mercy which we receive from Pope Francis and Catherine, I want to explain and reflect a little on the process of canonisation, particularly in relation to Catherine. In this context it is important to stress that Catherine was and remains an agent of God's mercy. With the example of her whole life and the ever-new legacy of fidelity and service she offers us, she is always pointing to an infinitely deeper and more enduring source of truth than herself which is the merciful heart of God.

### CANONISATION - STAGES

Canonisation is the formal, public declaration by the Church that a person is a saint. It is the last stage of a process – the cause of canonisation – which often takes many decades. Frequently, due to lack of evidence which satisfies the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (CCS), or indeed the emergence of negative information, the process does not advance beyond the first or second stage.

The stages are

#### 1 **Servant of God**

With approval of the CCS, the bishop of the diocese where the person spent most of her life, or died, initiates the cause of canonisation by naming the candidate *Servant of God* when it is clearly established that she has a reputation for holiness which inspires and influences people in their lives of faith.

## **2 Venerable**

The CCS or the Pope declares the candidate is *Venerable* when there is evidence that she lived her Christian faith in a way that goes beyond what is expected of an ordinary, good person. Rome speaks of a life of 'heroic virtue' which means that the Servant of God consistently practised to an extraordinary degree 'the theological virtues' of faith, hope and charity, and 'the cardinal virtues' of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

## **3 Blessed**

The CCS or the Pope beatifies the candidate, now entitled *Blessed*, because she is officially believed to have intercessory power as evidenced by a miracle of healing gained through her prayers to God.

## **4 Saint**

With increasing devotion of the people, and usually another miracle of healing through the candidate's intercession, the Pope confirms that she is indeed among the Church's official canon of saints.

## **CATHERINE'S CAUSE**

After a few frail attempts to progress it (1909, 1923, 1937), the cause of Catherine's canonisation was significantly boosted by Angela Bolster, a scholarly Sister of Mercy from Cork (d.2005) who, urged by the Bishop of Dublin, began in 1975 her rigorous gathering and analysis of relevant historic documents. Angela also visited sisters and colleagues beyond Ireland, including Australia, and did much to promote Catherine in a dispassionate, faithful way.

Angela's documentation became the substance of the formal presentation to Rome which was accepted on December 12, 1984. This documentation, technically called the *Positsio* and consisting largely of Catherine's writings, was carefully appraised by a panel of experts - six historians and eight theologians.

In light of the experts' affirmation of the *Positsio*, Pope John Paul II declared Catherine 'Venerable' on April 9, 1990. Following this breakthrough, the cause lost impetus for about seventeen years. Then in 2007, the Mercy International Association (MIA) determined to invest it with new energy because of requests from thousands of people world-wide whose faith in the God of mercy and commitment to Gospel service had been inspired and strengthened by the memory of Catherine.

The Irish Congregation of Sisters of Mercy is the *Petitioner of the Cause* in conjunction with the Bishop of Dublin. On behalf of MIA, the Congregation appointed Irish Sister of Mercy, Brenda Dolphin, to the role of *Postulator*.

## **POSTULATOR**

As Postulator, Brenda satisfies the CCS's requirements for the role as regards competence in theology and pastoral practice and skills in church and social history. Fortunately, she also speaks fluent Italian which is the language in which the CCS conducts most of its work. Brenda is the key person in promoting the cause, in monitoring developments which may advance it and in presenting material to the CCS.

## **MIRACLE REQUIRED**

Before Catherine can be beatified, the CCS requires a miracle that can be attributed to her advocacy with God. That is, there needs to be a clear sign that Catherine is with God. To date, the only acceptable sign for the CCS is a healing which cannot be explained in any medical or scientific way.

Over the years, a number of miracles have occurred apparently through Catherine's intercession but they do not satisfy the rigid criteria set by the CCS. Currently there is a case before the CCS which concerns the unexplainable recovery of a desperately ill child in America a few years ago. Maybe we will hear more of this in the months ahead.

The matter of needing a miracle may seem anachronistic to some of us. Surely, in these times of sophisticated medical discoveries, we could recognise the development of science and the skill and dedication of doctors as miracle enough. Or are there other convincing signs that a person who has died is close to God? For example, how do we interpret Catherine's 'status' with God when, through their prayer for her support, women gain freedom and psychological healing from violent situations; when unemployed people find meaningful work; when our prayers for insight and courage to make right decisions about complex issues are answered; when we ask for peace to prevail in a troubled country – and it does; when parents' prayer for a drug addicted son brings healing and stability; when we ask her intercession for assistance in the world-wide development of vaccines to overcome the scourge of Covid 19?

We who love and revere the memory of Catherine trust in her wisdom and care. We are confident that as she was 'on the side' of suffering, struggling people on earth, so she is in heaven; we believe that she is truly at home with God and that, as a brilliant instrument of God's mercy, she is ever in tune with our needs. Miraculous! Miraculous enough?

## **WHY BOTHER WITH SAINTHOOD?**

Sometimes it is said that Catherine would not want to be a saint. True! She was honestly self-aware and outstandingly self-effacing and she epitomised Jesus' counsel to the apostles to regard themselves merely as servants who have done no more than their duty (cf Luke 17:10).

Yet, in a real sense, while canonisation would confirm what we already believe about her, the cause is more about our needs than Catherine's sanctity. That is to say, I think our world and church are longing for enduring examples of leaders whose authority is life-giving and liberating, as Catherine's was. With increasing urgency, we need the inspiration of women and men who convincingly witness to the power of intelligent faith and brave hope – as Catherine did. We need people, like Catherine, to remind us, day in and day out, to uphold the innate dignity of every human being and to advocate for those who are demeaned by forces which seduce and oppress. We could also profit from pondering her gifts of character – humility, generosity, courage, capacity to forgive, equanimity, cheerfulness and humour – and how they enriched those diverse personalities who shared her life.

If Catherine is canonised, she will become a compelling witness to the consoling truths that God's mercy lives in and works through individuals in every time and place; that every one of us can engage in the redemptive work of God's mercy – restoring, renewing and transforming human hearts and minds; that through our faith and trust in God and through the integrity of our lives, we can contribute to the coming of God's reign of justice and peace for all.

And if she is not canonised?



# Words that bring life

**Acts 2:1-4** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

The feast day of Pentecost, celebrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> May this year, invited us to recall the founding of the church, and the inauguration of the church's mission to bring the good news of Jesus - God with us - to all nations. At the time of the apostles, the streets of Jerusalem would have been crowded with pilgrims who had come from many points of the compass to give thanks for God's goodness and protection during the Jewish Feast of Weeks. Held fifty days after the Passover, this significant religious observance, also known as Shavuot, celebrates the first fruits of the wheat harvest and commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24), when God and the Israelites entered into covenant relationship with each other. Offerings would have been made as the people gathered to rejoice before the Lord their God (Deut 16:11). Can we imagine their amazement, as the small group of Jesus' followers - Acts 1:15 tells us that the believers then numbered about one hundred and twenty persons - spoke in other languages and praised God? These were the same people whose leader had been mocked, beaten and crucified at Calvary just a few weeks earlier. When Peter, so endearingly flawed and so often afraid in the gospel accounts, but now transformed with a new courage, raises his voice and proclaims the gospel boldly to the crowds, three thousand repent and

are baptized. And in this way begins the handing on of the story of Jesus - of God with us - that has reverberated down the ages, bringing each and every one of us into faith so many generations later. You might like to take a moment to ponder the deep mystery of our connection to the apostles through this great chain of witnesses.



*Pentecost, by Mark Wiggan*

Pentecost shows us that in the mission of the church, words as well as deeds matter. On a very practical level, the ability given to the apostles at Pentecost to speak in other languages was essential for the good news to be taken to all nations. More than this, though, the Spirit which Jesus had promised they would receive (John 14:26) inspired their words and actions, just as the Spirit continues to breathe life into us today. Whether we are ready or not, the Spirit sends us into the world, too.

**John 15:26-27** When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

In our daily lives as Mercy Associates today, how might we communicate God's love through our words as well as our actions? We have all experienced the power of words to bring life, or hasten destruction. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur reportedly said that 'love proceeds by poetic amplification'.<sup>1</sup> I take this to mean that ordinary language, used with care, can be loving, can open up new meaning and hope. Poetic language invites generative, creative dialogue, touching us in our depths and resonating with the Word uttered in the life, death, teaching and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Can we discern the presence of the living Word in our conversations as Mercy Associates - within our gatherings and as we reach out in mercy to those around us?

There are three things the poor prize more highly than gold, tho' they cost the donor nothing: among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows.

Catherine McAuley, *Familiar Instructions*, p. 138

You might like to pray with this beautiful sonnet by Malcolm Guite. You can also hear him read the poem at

<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2021/05/22/our-mother-tongue-is-love-a-sonnet-for-pentecost-9/>

## Pentecost

Malcolm Guite

Today we feel the wind beneath our wings  
Today the hidden fountain flows and plays  
Today the church draws breath at last and sings  
As every flame becomes a Tongue of praise.  
This is the feast of fire, air, and water  
Poured out and breathed and kindled into earth.  
The earth herself awakens to her maker  
And is translated out of death to birth.  
The right words come today in their right order  
And every word spells freedom and release  
Today the gospel crosses every border  
All tongues are loosened by the Prince of Peace  
Today the lost are found in His translation.  
Whose mother tongue is Love in every nation.

Anne Pate,

Mercy Associates Network Facilitator (Victoria)

<sup>1</sup> Andre LaCoque, "Paul Ricoeur 1913-2005," 2005, <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=407>.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Jane Whipp, "Taking Care with Words: Everyday Poetics in Christian Pastoral Care," *Practical Theology* 3, no. 3 (2010), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1558/prth.v3i3.341>, 347.

## Our Vision Statement and Vision in Action

One of the most important documents for Mercy Associates is our **Vision Statement**, with the **Vision in Practice** following it. **Marg** has prepared a reflection on this document:

### Being Mercy, Doing Mercy

Put simply our mission as Mercy Associates is *to know God's loving kindness and share it with others*. This call, described in the *Vision Statement*, is beautifully complemented by the accompanying *Vision in Practice* which elaborates on how Mercy Associates do what they do.

The *Vision in Practice* offers sound counsel for those desiring to live Mercy, nurture the charism gifted them by Catherine and their commitment, and deepen their engagement in community and mission. In particular it reminds me of the challenge of ensuring 'right relationship' between contemplation and action in the Mercy tradition.

This is of course a challenge as old as the Gospels where we find the Martha and Mary story in Luke (10:38-42) offering us insight into how we feel when things get out of balance. Mercy mission does call for an 'urgent response to extravagant mercy' and a ministry of compassionate service through acts of service that make a difference to the most needy, whether family and friends or within the wider community.

The Mary and Martha parts in each of us can often stare each other down, each asserting their individual importance at different times and in different ways, and finding the balance is a constant challenge. So when we find ourselves becoming distracted and anxious in our doing we can perhaps gently remind ourselves, and each other, that "God does not look at the action but at the spirit motivating it, and will judge and reward us accordingly." (Retreat Instructions, p. 82)

To find balance and right relationship we need each other and the transforming love of God. 'If we open ourselves as much as we can to the friendship of Jesus and the warmth of human love, we will grow in personal maturity, in the serenity and grace of our woman/manhood. This growth is ultimately, God's transforming work within us.' (Catherine McAuley 3.13)

**Margaret Trevethan,  
Network Facilitator Queensland**



Michael Leunig

May our blessing be  
to hear Mercy purely,  
to know and speak it clearly  
to show and receive it clearly  
to show and receive it lovingly  
and to become, each day,  
more truly Mercy.

Shared by Sr Geraldine at a Ballarat Mercy Associates meeting



## Young supporting Hennessey College

Hennessey College students, who have previously travelled to Cambodia, took a donation from our group to the sisters. The students delivered an in service for our group and enjoyed a cuppa with us.

Back Row: Anne Murphy, Joy Cameron, Jason Smith, Zac Downey, Ryan Lacey and Miss Jenny Hayes

Front Row: Bridie Minehan, Chloe Madgwick, Ella Murphy and Marnie Schiller



## From Timor Leste – Pentecost gives us hope

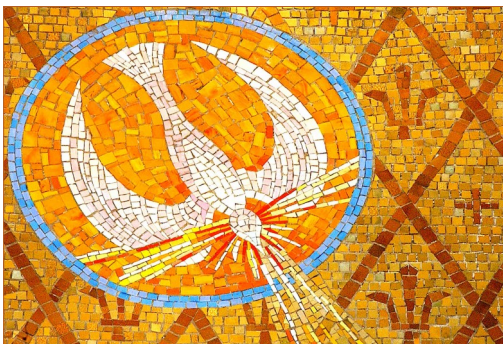
Recently Timor Leste experienced its worst floods and cyclone. Loss of lives, homes and livelihood, destruction of roads was yet another suffering they endured.

For a people who continue to suffer so much due to high unemployment, starvation and suicide at its highest they certainly must feel hopeless. So, maybe it is timely to look at Pentecost and what this important FEAST offers to each of us especially our suffering sisters and brothers.

One of the marks of Pentecost is its life-giving power. After Jesus' Ascension the apostles were seen as rather a discouraged group but they had been invested with great truth and a commission. 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...' (Mt. 28:19). But where was the power? What could they do?

With the arrival of the Holy Spirit there was hope in the power of the Spirit. But what about today's suffering, surely they must wonder is there any hope for them. The Mercy Associates in Timor Leste endeavour to be a Mercy presence in whatever way possible to their sisters and brothers.

So, together with this small group of Associates may we all see the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in a new light, in new places and in new ways, especially for those most in need.



Let us continue to be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to reach out in loving concern to others and help to empower them with hope.

So we pray:

Come, Spirit of God give us hope.

Come, Spirit of God empower all in their sufferings.

Come, Spirit of God energise us to be people of the Gospel.

Amen

Maryanne Dwyer RSM

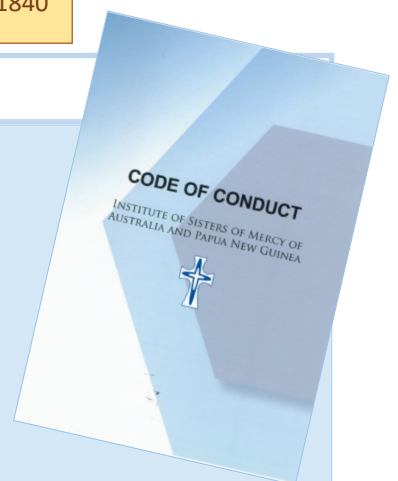
*Such is the mysterious Providence of God...  
'His ways are not like our ways—nor His thoughts like  
our thoughts.'* (Is. 55:8)

Catherine to Catherine Leahy, 13 Nov. 1840

## 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.
4. I commit to acting within the law, carefully, diligently and as a good steward of resources.





## From Papua New Guinea...

Mercy Friends here in Yarpas, Kunjingini and Kaugia parish have been doing some activities, such as fundraising for their group. They visited hospital and care centres by bringing food and clothes to the people. Mercy Friends also have their quarterly meetings and end of the month prayers. The group is made up of two different kinds of people - those who are working in the government jobs and village people. The two groups in the parish visit old people in the village and pray with them and bring food for them. They also clean the parish grounds and the Sisters' convent. We the Sisters living in three different communities in Wewak also attend their meetings to support them with their ideas for their work.

Sr Philomena RSM



## New Associates in Ballarat

On Saturday, 20 March, 2021 at 11am in the Mercy Chapel, a Covid safe, Commitment ceremony was conducted.

*Front L-R:* Sandra Harvey, Kathy Curran and Korina Hegert (new Associates)

*Back L-R:* Kathy Pollard and Jo Rix (formation), Helen Smith (technical assistance)



If we really want prayer, we'll have to give it time. We must slow down to a human tempo and we'll begin to have time to listen. And as soon as we listen to what's going on, things will begin to take shape by themselves....The best way to pray is: Stop. Let prayer pray within you, whether you know it or not.

THOMAS MERTON



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## Reflection on a Life of Volunteering

*'We should be shining lamps giving light to all around us.'* [Catherine – Retreat Instructions, Pg 155]

I was born into a Catholic family but not a practising Catholic family. Going to school, I went past the Church and presbytery. I started going to Mass on my own. After a while, Fr Lee came out and asked me if I wanted to make my Holy Communion as he had observed me attending Mass. So I received my First Holy Communion and with great joy started my faith journey.

In 1964 when our son started school, I began my volunteering journey which I am still on. I helped at the school tuckshop at the end of 1965 when we moved to Gladstone. My husband Gordon and I began our long volunteering journey with the Catholic schools – myself at tuckshop and Mother's Club while my husband coached the 4 stone 11 pounds football team while being President of both the primary and secondary school clubs. The Mothers Club started bingo under the highset Presbytery to raise money for the school. We cooked pikelets for morning tea. Later on, the bingo moved out to Chanel College and became the most popular and successful bingo in Gladstone. My faith sustained me as these were busy times but friends that were made then, have been friends ever since.

After the school years, I helped at Meals On Wheels for many years and the older people were a great source of happiness to me leading me on in my faith journey. I helped at Red Cross Blood Bank for 22 years. I learnt blood donors weren't only generous but to our family a life saver. Our daughter was diagnosed with leukaemia, thus began a hard year. I moved to Hervey Bay to look after our two young granddaughters as our daughter and son-in-law travelled back and forth for treatment to Brisbane.

When the Mater Hospital was having its opening ceremony in 2000, I received an invitation to volunteer. I stayed until the Mater was closed last year – 20 years. Gordon and I joined Crime Stoppers and he also assisted with 'Volunteering in Policing'. After my husband's death, I joined the 'Volunteering in Policing' too, which I still am doing.

While my daughter and I were travelling overseas in 2016, there was a pilgrimage to Dublin for Mercy Associates, so we made time to join the group (*pictured below—I am fourth from the right*). I cannot describe what it meant to walk where Catherine walked, to stand by the bed she slept and died in, to stand at her burial place and hold the ring which she was professed with. My faith was so intensified. I always look forward to our Mercy Associates gatherings here in Gladstone. I



feel contented in my journey of life in my faith and know God has been with me in everything I have done.

*'The simplest and most practical lesson I know ... is to resolve to be good today – but better tomorrow. Let us take one day only in hands – at a time, merely making a resolve for tomorrow. Thus we may hope to get on – taking short careful steps, not great strides.'*

[Letter to Mary de Sales White, Feb 28, 1841]

Dorothy Leech, Gladstone

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea. We pay our respect to past, present and emerging elders. We look forward to an era when all peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea live in harmony with one another.





## New Associates at Tuart Hill, Perth

Pentecost Sunday was the occasion of more than the usual celebrations for the Tuart Hill Mercy Associates group.

At the annual commitment /recommitment ceremony, three women made their initial commitment as Mercy Associates. Nola, Kim and Margaret were joined at the ceremony by the other Mercy Associates in the group, as they renewed their commitment. Also present was Community Leader for South A in Western Australia, Carmel Daley RSM. Sr Carmel received the commitments from the candidates and presented each with her badge and certificate. Altogether, eight Sisters of Mercy attended the ceremony. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Sisters moved to the front of the group and sang a Mercy blessing to the Associates.

The ceremony was preceded by a period of reflection for the new candidates and current Mercy Associates, in which they were invited by group leader, Jan O'Connor, to ponder why they want to be a Mercy Associate – why this is important to them. Three questions were posed:

What is important to you about being a Mercy Associate?

What do you enjoy most about being part of this group?

If you were asked who/what Mercy Associates are and what they do, how would you reply?

In true Mercy style, a period of hospitality followed the ceremony. The Tuart Hill group meets at Catherine's House of Hospitality, a retreat centre run by the Sisters.

Carmel Ross



## From Young, a prayer for those preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation

**Lord**, we bring our prayer before you and ask for your continued blessing upon the children of our parish community who are being presented for the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. May their seed of faith be nurtured in the rich soil of St Mary's faith community.

Give to these children who are in our care and prayer your grace to be opened to, and energised in spirit, to experience your love for each of them through their journey of preparation and beyond.

Lord, we ask for a renewal of faith in family members who present their children for the sacraments of initiation, that their faith will continue to be energised and that they will respond too your call for them to be the first and foremost teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

May all children and their families participating in St Mary's parish-based sacramental programme continue to be encouraged by the support and prayers of their family in faith. May our witness in embracing the sacramental life of the Church be testimony for them to be drawn ever more closely to you by living out their faith through the sacraments beyond these early years of growth and formation.

We pray for all members of St Mary's faith community as we endeavour to reach out to those around us through prayer, hospitality, action and welcome.

In your name, Lord of Mercy, we place this prayer before you. Amen.

**St Mary's Parish, Young**  
(prayed at each Mercy Associates group meeting)



## Rockhampton—being inspired by our founding Sisters of Mercy and asking for God's Blessing upon us all

At the end of April, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates gathered to celebrate Mass, which was presided by Father Matthias Ogwo. The music, liturgy and Father's words of encouragement for us all, in endeavouring to follow the Mercy charism, made it very special and uplifting.

Morning tea followed Mass and then our guest speaker was Sister Joanne Molloy rsm, who continued to tell us the story about the founding Sisters of Mercy in Rockhampton, after having provided us with the first chapter in November last year.

Sister Joanne's choice of topic was intriguing, namely, ***'A Quantity of Extra Luggage': The Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy and their early foundations.*** *'A Quantity of Extra Luggage'*, referred to the unnamed Sisters of Mercy on the manifest of the ship, which had arrived in Rockhampton from Brisbane on 4 August, 1873.

Sister Joanne lead us to appreciate some of the hardships these early Sisters must have endured with the climate, travel (sea, train, sulkies), accommodation and funding (inadequate) to establish schools, convents, orphanages and hospitals, initially extending as far north as Cooktown! For those of us who are locals, it has been particularly interesting piecing together the history of a number of our old and much loved buildings, which still surround us.

Sister Joanne concluded her presentation with these beautiful words: 'Over the years, there has been growth and change, but there has been one constant: to provide excellence in education, health and aged care with a compassion infused by Mercy values. May this distinctive quality link the past, the present and the future.' We have now heard the story up to 1960 and are looking forward to the next Chapter in the not too distant future!

Following on from Sister's presentation, we elected our new Chair, of the Rockhampton Mercy Associates, Kathleen Winter, who graciously accepted this position. For the 'handing over', Sr Beryl Amedee prepared and lead a very beautiful prayer service, which included readings from Scripture and Catherine McAuley, the lighting of our Mercy Associates candle and acknowledging our previous leaders, Maureen Hanrahan, Del Rowan and Ailsa McLaughlin. *(In the photo, Kathleen is holding the Mercy Associates candle and Kathy Maloney is presenting our outgoing Chair, Ailsa McLaughlin with a bunch of flowers with Sister Beryl next to her)* The prayer service concluded with asking for God's Blessing upon us all and then singing the hymn 'I thank my God.' It truly was a wonderful morning!

Jennifer Loscher, Rockhampton

