



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 22, June 2022

Dear Associates and Sisters,

Today we are celebrating the Solemnity of **Pentecost**, a time of joy because of the generous outpourings of grace we receive from the Spirit. We know the **gifts of the Holy Spirit**—wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, reverence (piety) and awe of God (fear of the Lord) (Is. 11:2). We also know of the **fruits of the Spirit**—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

Thinking about Catherine McAuley, there seems much evidence in her life that Catherine's prayer was indeed fruitful—these attributes shone in her disposition and are readily found in her writings.

In the March newsletter, I mentioned that the **Mercy Associates Leadership Group** had met over a weekend in March. It was an important gathering and fruitful in many ways. We spent our time reflecting on how the Mercy Associates groups are going—successes and disappointments—the stuff of life! We also looked at the future, always unknown yet also inviting us to dream of how we can flourish and work towards a hopeful, fruitful future for Mercy Associates.

We looked at our **Vision Statement**, now six years old! We realised there are a few updates and minor amendments that would improve it, so a small team of Marg and Anne, assisted by Helen Fowler and Jo Rix, will complete this task.

The Mercy Associates who are on that group have been

invited to write a reflection on their observations of our discussions. It's important to share these with all Mercy Associates because only a small number of Associates can attend this meeting, yet their input helps Chris, Anne, Marg and myself to think about how we can best support groups and develop new groups in the future. The reflections written by Jo, Helen and Dianne are on the following page—and are well worth reading.

They lead to some questions for individual Mercy Associates and the groups they are members of:

◆ What are the most important things, for you, about being a Mercy Associate? What do you gain from being involved?

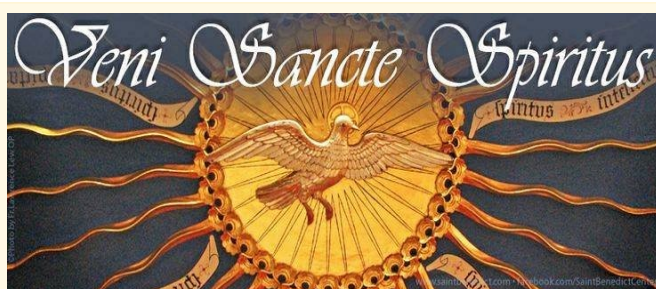
◆ What opportunities do you see for your group in the future? How do you ensure your group remains strong and supportive of its members and true to the Mercy charism?

If you would like to jot down your thoughts about either or both of these questions, please feel welcome to send them to me by email, to:

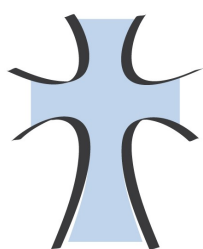
mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au. From time to time, we will publish some of these in *Many Paths*. These questions might also spark a fruitful discussion at a meeting of your Mercy Associates group.

Carmel Ross

Executive Officer



**Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit,
and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.**



MERCY
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

One Charism, Many Paths



**If a prudent, cautious
beginning is made,
there is every prospect
of success.**

Reflections on the Mercy Associates movement and future hopes

Jo, Helen and Dianne joined us at the Mercy Associates Leadership Group gathering in March. Afterwards, we asked them their thoughts about the weekend and about the future opportunities for Mercy Associates and their groups...

Jo Rix, Ballarat

The Reflective Practice Approach used when reviewing the Mercy Associates' Vision Statement and Vision in Practice was the most significantly enlightening and enriching time for me. It allowed me to reflect on the Mercy Associates movement generally and why we exist.

"Mercy Associates are called to live and share the compassion of God". These striking opening words and the remainder of the Vision Statement provide a strong focus for on-going formation for Mercy Associates. In order to maintain our purpose and vision, I believe it is very important that our identity as Mercy Associates is enabled to emerge and strengthen within our faith communities. Into the future, Mercy Associates, through contemplation and action, will need to adjust to and welcome change. In Catherine McAuley, we are provided with excellent modelling as to how this can be achieved.



Helen Fowler, Young



Having only attended two meetings of this group in person and having been an Associate for less than five years, I sometimes feel I have been thrown into the deep, BUT that feeling is soon dispelled when I encounter the people who make up the steering of this remarkable group of Women.

This said leads me to: my overall feelings of anticipation of the next phase of The Mercy Associates Chapter. I am excited to explore the milestones of the development and **history of the Mercy Associates**. I want to find out and have the story captured of my local group and how it has contributed to the overall impact of the whole Associates. This I feel is most exciting.

Establishing a Mercy Associates Day for celebration would give local groups more recognition in their Faith Community.

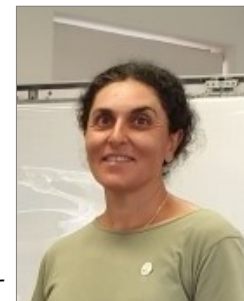
The idea of being called to be a Mercy Associate is challenging as it seems to me we are called from our initial exposure to our Faith from parents, teachers or if at a mature stage in our lives, people we encounter. The call is sometimes more subtle / perhaps it is always subtle.

Prayer and Contemplation

Prayer: Forming the **Vision Statement into a Prayer** would make the Vision Statement easier to recall, could it go one stage further and be set to Music.

Contemplation has many styles and the discussions had over the Leadership weekend led me to realise that a quiet time not necessarily a still time can bear fruit as long as some point we reflect while still to allow the fruit of reflection (contemplation) to take hold.

Dianne Hanna, NSW East Coast



I appreciated being invited to attend the annual leadership meeting and gain a better understanding of responding to a calling and being a Mercy associate.

As a new Mercy Associate I tried to listen and absorb as much as I could while also feeling comfortable to get involved with my own perspectives. The highlights for me were listening to the experiences of those gathered and the initiatives each group was involved with and the simple ways we can be Mercy for others in our everyday. The speed dating idea for forming new members is ingenious and is an example of the creativity and energy with which the leaders embrace their calling. Also our time in prayer and reflection helped to centre us and I was grateful for the experienced voices that lead us into deeper contemplation during this time.

While it was good looking forward and contemplating a distinct identity for the Mercy Associates it was also sad that there was encouragement for this to be unique of the sisters who have been so instrumental in each of our responses to the voice which calls us and that are connected to a legacy of inspirational women before them. Perhaps this is the struggle that I deal with - finding space to celebrate the fruits of the branch while also caring for the branch that nourishes the fruit until it is ready to die and create new life.

Though to end on a positive I wait in anticipation to hear more about the origin stories of each of the groups and opportunities for the groups to come together in celebration of these stories. I also look forward to being part of the origin stories of the NSW East Coast Mercy Associates.

The Story of Mercy among Us –

PAT BOURKE, Goulburn and Young, Mercy Associate Honorary

I first met Pat at a Mercy Associates' meeting in Goulburn in the early 1990s. It has been an honour to know Pat as a fellow Mercy Associate, over the intervening years. Pat is a dedicated Mercy Associate who always attended our meetings in Goulburn and contributed in so many wonderful ways. She served on the Mercy Associates Implementation Committee during 2015 and 2016 and was a highly valued member of that Committee. I recall Pat's great contribution and work towards the development of our current Mercy Associates badge, in finalising the wording of the current Vision Statement, and in assisting in the development of the current Mercy Associates Handbook.

Thank you, Pat, for all you have done and congratulations on becoming a Mercy Associate Honorary.

Christine Convery, NSW Network Facilitator



Mercy Associates Implementation Committee. Standing: Sr Sally Bradley rsm, Carmel Ross, Christine Convery, Catherine Smith, Sharon Gillett. Seated on grass: Terry Power, Margaret McDonald. Seated beside Catherine statue: Joan Neal (left), Pat Bourke (at far right)



Over thirty years ago two Sisters of Mercy formed a group they called Mercy Associates. The nuns were Sister Carmel Gardiner and Sister Monica. Both these wonderful Sisters have recently died. The group consisted of men and women. They were issued with Mercy badges. It was later discovered were only for vowed Sisters, so we were not entitled to wear the Mercy Badges.

The group consisted of over 20 members and met at the noviciate and later at the convent. Some years later the actual Mercy Associates began formation and more than half of the group decided to refrain from moving over to the new group. Until the first lockdown they were still meeting in one of the units with the Sisters and now call themselves Friends in Mercy.

I was fortunate to be selected to be on the Mercy Associates Implementation Committee. We only have four members now as two members died recently. Only myself and John Ings are officially Associates. John is our miracle man having been blind for 13 years after having shingle in his eyes. He feels very strongly that our prayers helped him find the specialist that restored the sight in one eye. His operation was a first in Australia and was shown on 60 Minutes. Sadly the shingles returned in one eye but his vision in the other is excellent, but he couldn't regain his driver's license.

We haven't been meeting as we don't have anywhere to meet at the moment due to massive restoration in our Parish, but keep in touch. We contribute our loose change when we catch up so I've been sending that to Sr Sally for Mercy Works. When the cathedral reopens after the restoration we will have somewhere to meet and will be able to start recruiting.

Pat Bourke, Goulburn and Young, Mercy Associate Honorary

Mercy Associate Honorary is an option available to Mercy Associates who, because of age, frailty, illness, etc., are no longer able to attend meetings of their local group. It enables them to remain Mercy Associates, with their ministry being prayer for others. A formal acknowledgement is provided through the issuing of an 'Honorary' Certificate. Contact your Network Facilitator (Chris in NSW; Anne in VIC & SA; Marg in QLD; Carmel in WA) if there are Associates in your group for whom this option should be considered.

Ballarat Mercy Associates visit Woowookarung Regional Park

Ballarat is in the fortunate position of having the Woowookarung Regional Park just 4 kilometers from the centre of the city. Woowookarung - 'place of plenty' is part of the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people. This 641 hectare park, established in 2016, has been largely untouched since the end of the gold rush. Its Mess-mate Stringybark, Grass Trees, and native plants, animals and fungi make it perfect for bushwalking.

In 2021 the park was further enhanced with the opening of, Australia's first Dementia-friendly Forest and Sensory Trail. This is of special significance to Ballarat Mercy Associates as one of our members, Anne Tudor OAM, was instrumental in its development. Our Coordinating group decided we would visit the area.

Our Visit

On 27th April, twelve Associates met at the park and made the short walk to the stone circle where, amid the tranquility of the grass trees and Stringbarks, Geraldine Mugavin RSM shared the moving reflection, 'Prayer for a Just Climate'. Anne Tudor then talked about the development of the Trail, its significance to people living with Dementia and the role she and her late wife, Edie Mayhew, played in the project.

Everyone found the event deeply moving especially those making their first visit to the area. All agreed to make follow up visits in winter for the fungi and spring for the flowers.



PRAYER FOR A JUST CLIMATE

God of Creation,

You created night and day.

You separated the sea from the sky.

You gave life to all living creatures and saw that it was good.

Help us to reconnect with the majesty of your creation.

God of Love,

Fill us with your love for all creation.

Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear.

Inspire us to live simply and in harmony with creation.

Help us to be good stewards, caring for all creation with self-sacrificing and nurturing love.

God of Compassion,

Breathe into us solidarity with all who suffer now

and the future generations who will suffer because of our environmental irresponsibility. Help us to put people before profit and 'being' before 'having'.

God of Justice,

Empower us to work together as one global community,

To find creative and just solutions to protect those most vulnerable in our world, and all of creation for future generations.

Move us into action for climate justice and to restore your creation.

Amen.

Caritas Australia



Gladstone Mercy Associates celebrates 30 year anniversary

Annette Rowe is a member of the Mercy Associates Leadership Group. She is a leader of the Gladstone group, currently celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of the group. Below are Annette's reflections. Norma Tanna, a past Lay Leader and Celebration Coordinator has written about the activities planned to celebrate such a wonderful milestone.

Annette Rowe

For me, it became obvious during our time in Sydney, that the various groups would take away differing needs and focus from our deliberations and reflections. I will therefore, share a little of our Gladstone history which remains a larger group, in the context of the Mercy Associates [MA] movement. Our Mercy Associates group began September 1992, thus celebrating 30 years this year. It was formed and commissioned by Sr Maria Goretti. Sister also had the vision to create our first Lay leaders in 1998. Sr Beryl Amedee in 2003 followed her as the group's Mentor. There has not been any Sisters of Mercy living in Gladstone since 2013.



The changing face of service – through 'being' and 'doing', has adjusted over the years to meet the needs of the community of that time:

- ◇ from casserole banks for those grieving loss and other social and prayer support;
- ◇ to volunteering at the newly built Mater Hospital in 2000 {Pg 4 in Chp 8.2- Formation Resource} [Hospital is now sold to the State Government];
- ◇ while all community and Church volunteering has been affected in the last two years by Covid restrictions.

Then there is the need to look after each other, especially in personal ways, for example in grief: In the last four months, we have had three Associates who have moved on to their reward in heaven, while one has had her son die suddenly and another his father after a long illness. The challenge for us in Gladstone is to:

- ◇ remain vital and reflective of the needs of our Church, City, Australia and the world;
- ◇ contemplate on our future direction as a 'faith community' while reflecting the teaching and works of Catherine, living a life of 'mercy';
- ◇ attract younger members who have not known Sisters of Mercy in their lifetime, for we are now Catherine's 'hands, feet, heart and spirit'.

With the support of each State's Network Facilitator, every Mercy Associates group will need to discern their own future direction through ongoing discussion and reflection on our Vision Statement and 'Vision in Action'.

Norma Tanna

In 1992, after a year of preparation and teaching by Sr Maria Goretti, about the life of Catherine McAuley, the Gladstone Mercy Associates were commissioned. The Badges and Certificates were presented by Sr Bernice Loch RSM. As this is our 30th year of commitment in serving the Parish and City of Gladstone, the Associates have organised to celebrate on two separate occasions in June.

Firstly, we will gather on **June 4th** to share our Mercy journeys in an informal way. Each Associate will *reflect on their 'call to mercy'* through the life of Catherine and her Sisters down through the centuries. We will have a *sing-a-long*, sharing our favourite hymns with each other. Fr Ashwin our resident 'musical' Priest, will accompany us on the piano. Morning tea will be provided, so no cooking needed by anyone.

Then on **June 28th**, we will gather with as many past Mercy Associates as can attend, as well Sr Beryl Amedee [our present Mentor] and Sr Grace Bartolo. We will celebrate **Eucharist** at 10.00 in our local Star of the Sea Church. Fr Ashwin will be the celebrant. This will be followed by **lunch** at the Reef Hotel. A display of memorabilia is being collected. Partners and friends will be most welcome to join us. We are looking forward to catching up with previous Associate friends.

For all that
has been:
Thanks!
For all that
will be:
Yes!



Rockhampton Mercy Associates study the Gospel of Luke

On Saturday the 7th of May, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates gathered for a very special and inspirational morning.

We began with a celebration of Mass at St Joseph's Cathedral with a beautiful liturgy of prayer and music. Father Jayanthi inspired and encouraged us to promote the vision and spirit of Catherine McAuley, continuing her work and the work of the Sisters of Mercy to show the face of mercy in our world.

A lovely morning tea followed where we enjoyed some catch up time with one another and then we were blessed with a fascinating presentation by Father Noel Milner, as much an historian as a priest, entitled 'It is the Time to Tell

the Story - St Luke and his Writings'.

Father Noel explained the unique nature and viewpoint of St Luke amongst the Gospel writers. As a physician, he was a learned and educated man and he was also a 'Westerner' (Greek), in contrast to Sts Matthew, Mark and John, giving him a different cultural perspective. He was also the only one of the four to write his account purely from eyewitness reports, as opposed to his own experience, although he was also a very close companion of St Paul. He almost certainly met Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, at Ephesus and, as such, his Gospel is the only one to include stories from Jesus' birth and childhood. Together with the

Acts of the Apostles, Luke's work makes up almost 30% of the New Testament!

Father Noel's incredible knowledge and vast experience always make for fascinating and very thought-provoking presentations. We were all very grateful for the privilege and opportunity to learn and reflect on these teachings which continue to inspire our own goals in carrying out the work of the Mercy Associates. The morning closed with prayer and a few business items and we all look forward to our next gathering in a few weeks' time.

Kerry Vella



Griffith Mercy Associates celebrate a milestone birthday!



Our small group of four recently gathered to celebrate Dawn McIntyre's 85th birthday.

We prayed the Laudato Si prayer and reflection.

Photo: Standing on left Dawn McIntyre right Margaret Pologarto.

Sitting on left Odette Dotter. Sitting right Maureen Burley.

Prayers you are fond of...

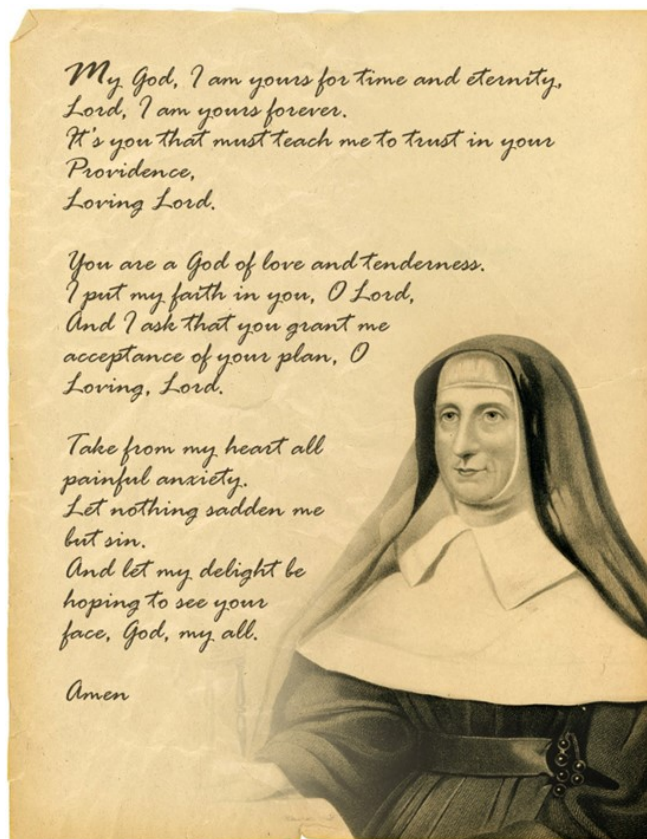
One reason people become Mercy Associates is because they value the chance to gather with like-minded people who cherish the Mercy charism. And when groups gather, they pray...

Many pray **Catherine's Suscipe**. There are other prayers groups pray together too, and we'd love you to share some of these with us. We are keen to put a short book of prayers together that groups can use at meetings or that individual Mercy Associates can use for their personal prayer and reflection.

Chris has already written a couple of prayers, and another one will be written based on our Vision Statement. These will be included in our book of prayers.

If your group has a 'favourite' prayer you are fond of, please email it to: mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au

We will compile these into a resource that can be made available on line and in print.



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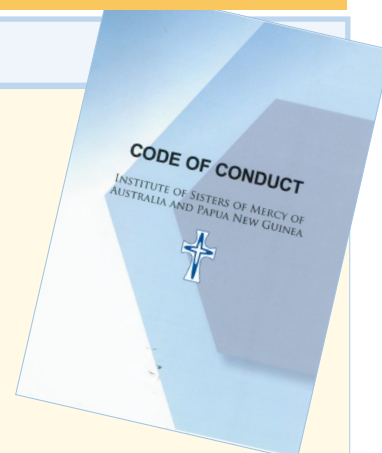
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ISMAPNG Code of Conduct

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.



Nunga Babies Watch

Silent Continuation of the Stolen Generation in South Australia

Mercy Work's Adelaide First Nations Advocacy project – known as **Nunga Babies Watch** – has called upon the South Australian Government for immediate action to end another Stolen Generation from happening.

“We demand an end to the arbitrary taking of our children and their placement in non-indigenous settings,” says one action of the 20-point statement, presented by members of the Nunga Babies Watch in partnership with the Grannies Group (respected Elders in the community).

“We are strongly and irrevocably opposed to the adoption of our children from non- kinship, out-of-home, residential care and/ or foster care. We do not want ‘assimilation’ of our children to continue, nor do we want a silent continuation of the Stolen Generation,” said the statement, presented by Ngadjuri woman Auntie Pat Waria-Read, at South Australian Parliament House in December.

In South Australia, one in every 11 Indigenous children lives in state care, and only 53% are placed with their family or kin. The latest report by the SA Guardian for Children and Young People shows the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care has increased from 4,370 children to 4,647 between June 2020 and June 2021, an increase of 6.3%.

Auntie Pat, who also heads our Mercy Works Salt N' Pepper Adelaide project, a pre-release and post-release outreach program for Aboriginal women in prison, is disappointed the group have had no response.

“This is a national disgrace. Months later and there's been no response from the Ministers, I thought there would be

an uproar. It's a continuation of the Stolen Generation.”

Included in their submissions is the call for an Independent Aboriginal Controlled Child Care Agency, and an Aboriginal panel to review decisions taken by the Department of Child Protection (DCP).

“We're not going to let it stop us, even if we get no response. We're going to get on with the business so we can inform people. We're going to go on raising the issue with Aboriginal women. Our Voice is connecting with the community.”

“The DCP has to be held accountable for its decisions in the taking away of our children. If an Aboriginal child can't stay with their mother, follow the mother's bloodline and you'll find some-one who can look after that child.”

The Mercy Works Project came about after Auntie Pat, a former chaplain for the Department of Correctional Services, saw first-hand the DCP taking children away from their mothers while they are in hospital, or as soon as they are in jail, often presenting them with an order to take their children into residential care until they are 18 and without being informed they have a right to a lawyer.



Auntie Pat, who heads our Nunga Babies Watch in Adelaide, pictured here with our outgoing Mercy Works Project Co-ordinator Sr Anne Foale RSM.



Members of the Nunga Babies Watch and Grannies Group (L-R) Julie Toyama, Louise Davies, Jean Pinkie, Dorothy Young, Diana Grose, Pat Waria-Read, with SA Best MLC Connie Bonaros.

Mercy Works is proud to partner with this project, along with our other six First Nations Projects, to work in partnership towards Closing The Gap and breaking the cycle.

Jo Casamento

**Communications Coordinator
MercyWorks**

Laudato Si' Week:

The 'Caress of God' and caring for our common home

Laudato Si' week was recently celebrated throughout the world. In honour of this, the Institute and The Mercy Hub in Melbourne hosted a two-part series with the wonderful scripture scholar, Veronica Lawson RSM.

The celebration coincided with our federal election, the most important election in history for taking action on the climate crisis, which proved to be the top issue for most Australians.

The leading climate activist, Bill McKibbin of 350.org, said that Laudato Si' was one of the most influential documents of recent times for three reasons: its insistence that climate change is the fault of the human; the call for rapid conversion of our economies from coal, oil, and gas to renewable energy; and the reminder that the first victims of the environmental crisis are the poor.

Veronica's emphasis during Laudato Si' week was a little different (photo at right). She shared her personal story of a deep attachment to "Gabor" (the Indigenous name for Mount Macedon, Victoria) which she described as a place that had "mercied" her. She reminded us of the significant moment of the encyclical for the Church and the world when it declared for the first time that the natural world (mountains, rivers, atmosphere, trees, animals) has intrinsic worth and that each should be honoured, according to Pope Francis, as "a caress of God" and as "holy". These insights are based on solid biblical foundations which were also shared.

Veronica reflected that if each of us engaged with one special place that has "mercied" us and acknowledged this place as a sacred "caress of God" this would become a place we would care for and defend against all violations.

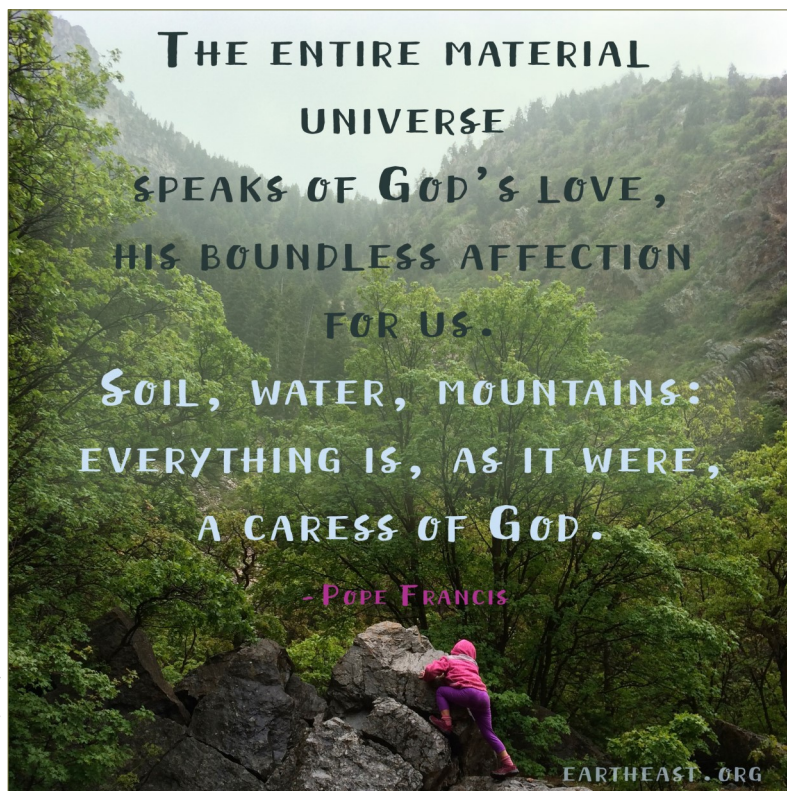
Such love of places also leads to practical action. While most action needs to occur at the level of government and industry, some 27% are things we as individuals can take on. As winter begins, here are some reminders of practical ways we can take action to care for our common home:

- ◆ Is your home as insulated as it could be? Have it checked out and if necessary install good quality insulation – it will reduce your bill and your emissions.
- ◆ Have you checked your doors and windows for drafts? Sealing doors and windows with draft-stopping tape or weather strips makes a huge difference to the efficiency of heaters.
- ◆ Do you need to purchase a new heater? Consider going electric for heating given widespread access to renewable energy now and into the future. Look for an efficient one with a long life guarantee.
- ◆ Do you have a garden, balcony or windowsill? Consider planning now for any flowering plants you might be able to get going by early spring when the bees wake up hungry.

To catch up on Veronica Lawson's presentations [click here](#).

Sally Neaves

*Integral Ecology Animator/Mission Ministry
Resource Coordinator, ISMAPNG*



Tuart Hill, Perth—Peace and Reflection Garden at St Catherine's House

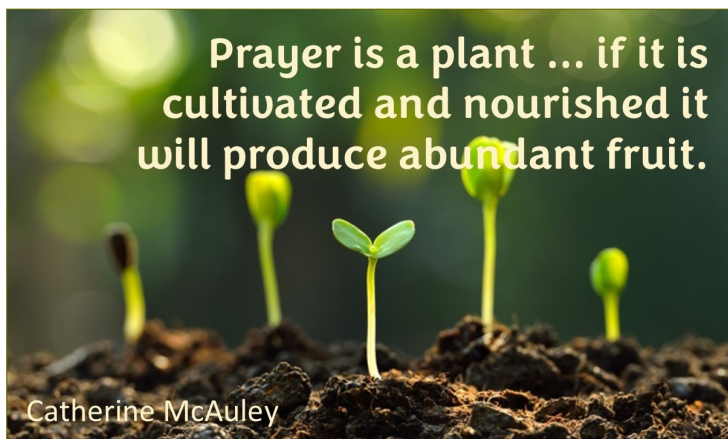
Several months ago I sent in what was probably the beginnings of our “Peace and Reflection Garden” at St Catherine's House of Hospitality in Tuart Hill, WA. The garden is the brain child of Sr Elizabeth and, with the help of a couple of volunteers, has transformed the backyard into a very beautiful and very thoughtfully planned out garden. Nothing has been just ‘put in’, but thought has been given to the types of plants and where they have been placed, with seating also strategically placed, to offer optimal opportunity for people to relax , reflect and enjoy the beauty and peace of nature.

At present, as the pictures show, it is a blaze of colour, with a definite “Wow!” factor. Once seated, the viewer can not only enjoy nature's presentations, but there are lots of little surprises to find, almost at their feet e.g. to suddenly see a little statue of a child reading, or a little Buddha or perhaps some beetles or frogs etc at work.

You will notice one of the pictures shows a gate, welcoming the seeker to explore and enjoy. The gate, plus a number of other significant features have come from the homes of sisters who have now moved house. So they are represented in a special way, and remembered for their great contributions to Mercy Work. So, as I said, everything has been very thoughtfully and lovingly placed.

We are both delighted with this great addition to “ The House” and proud of the work and achievement of Sr Elizabeth and her helpers. I am sure it will bring much joy to those who use it and I wanted to share our joy and pride with the rest of our Mercy family via Many Paths.

Jan O'Connor, with gratitude to **Sr Elizabeth Nicholls**



Catherine McAuley

