

Celebrating God's Merciful Love



Celebration
John Swanson

The Mercy Associates Vision Statement expresses our identity and calling as Mercy Associates. The Vision Statement begins with these powerful words:

“Mercy Associates are called to live and share the compassion of God revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, in Scripture and through the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.

Guided by mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, they:

- celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love ...”

We can so easily skim over these familiar phrases without reflecting on what they mean for us. I invite you to pause and notice how they resonate with you.

In a world which feels very dark at present, beset by wars, the ongoing effects of the pandemic, political upheaval, and the climate catastrophe, the call to “celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love” may challenge as well as inspire us.

And yet we know that celebrating and giving thanks for the merciful love of God is at the heart of the Christian story. Perhaps this is why it is named first in our Vision Statement, before the other ways in which Mercy Associates live and share the compassion of God. In words often attributed to St. Augustine:

We are an Easter people, and ‘Alleluia’ is our song!

Our “alleluia” does not deny the reality of suffering and death - we live in the light of the Paschal mystery - but they do not have the final word.

Let us consider our call to “celebrate and give thanks for God’s merciful love” in more depth.

God’s merciful love Helena O’Donoghue rsm writes that

“Mercy is the personal face of the only God we know,
the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

When God appears to Moses and commissions him to bring the people of God out of Egypt, Moses asks what name he should use for God when speaking with the Israelites. God answers “I am who I am ... God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and steadfast love” (Exodus 3:14; Exodus 34:6). Helena O’Donoghue reflects that “these are God’s credentials – an identity and name by which empathy and action are interwoven into one. ... There is no other God than the God who is/am mercy”. Helena O’Donoghue rsm, “Mercy”, *MIA Readings for Mercy*, 2016, the 185th Anniversary of the Founding of the Sisters of Mercy

Celebrating and giving thanks Scripture abounds with times of celebration like this one: *Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.* (Luke 1:57-58) They rejoice because of the mercy of the Lord. And they rejoice together.



In a note at the end of her letter to Sister Cecilia Marmion on January 15th 1841, Catherine McAuley famously counselled the sisters:

“Dance every evening”

It is very moving to think of the early sisters, who worked so hard and with such love among the poorest and most rejected of society, making time for celebration and fun. I wonder how this helped to sustain them as they shared God’s merciful love?

Mystical Community
Yoram Raanan

In your Mercy Associates community, how do you celebrate and give thanks for God’s merciful love?

How does being a Mercy Associate help you live a life of merciful love?

Let us pray ...

Loving God,
Out of your merciful love we come to life,
By your love we are sustained,
And your love calls us home.
We pray that by your grace
We will live and share your compassion,
As we celebrate and give thanks together.
Amen