



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 23, August 2022

Dear Associates and Sisters,

One of the things people most value about being a Mercy Associate is the chance to share **a time of prayer** with others in their group when the group meets.

Mercy Associates gatherings always include a period of prayer and this ranges from having a set collection of prayers through to having a group member whose job it is to prepare a prayer and reflection to use at each meeting. Whatever the format, prayer is core to being part of a Mercy Associates group.

As well, quite a number of groups with members who are housebound have developed prayer ministry as one of their ways of serving the needs of others (these will include Mercy Associates Honorary who remain connected with their group). This involves a member of each of these Mercy Associates groups drawing up a list of prayer intentions each month, and these include those in the local community who are ill, grieving, or experiencing suffering of some kind; and other needs within Australia and beyond, such as those displaced by the war in Ukraine; refugees seeking to resettle; those affected by natural disasters around the world, etc. Someone in the group has the job of contacting the housebound Mercy Associates and letting them know of the prayer needs of the month.

Some important things then happen: First, the needs of the world have an extra person praying for them as these housebound Mercy Associates adopt a personal ministry of prayer. These prayers are, as it were, added to the prayers of the local Mercy Associates group, expanding the faith community of people who care about these world needs and devote prayer time to them.

Second, these housebound women and men of mercy remain connected to their local Mercy Associates group, even though they no longer can attend meetings. Becoming elderly, frail and housebound can often be a time of increasing isolation, and also a time of feeling useless as one's physical capabilities steadily wane. But prayer doesn't require physical abilities, it requires a heart that wants to be open to God and to express its compassion and concern for those in need around the world. Age needn't get in the way, and continuing to belong to a Mercy Associates group through this ministry helps to alleviate the isolation that might otherwise be experienced.

Ballarat Mercy Associate, Les Stewart, now prepares a monthly prayer sheet containing the names of those whose birthdays occur in that month, along with feast days that are in the month. You are welcome to become part of this way of joining in prayer for these Mercy Associates – email me to provide your name, email address and date of birth (we don't need the year!) and I'll pass these on to Les.

Mercy Associates groups are faith communities bonded by their commitment to prayer and to ministry action suited to their abilities. The previous Abbot of the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia, Fr Placid Spearitt OSB, once commented that **prayer doesn't change God, it changes us**. The Mercy Associates groups involved in prayer ministry are serving the world through their prayer, yet they also are remaining connected to their local group and enriching their spiritual life as they keep a central focus on prayer.

Carmel Ross
Executive Officer



No matter how small the gift, God gives the increase.

Catherine McAuley

Prayer Within and for Our Lives — Christine Convery

As Mercy Associates we hold in our Vision Statement that we*'nurture (our) relationship with God to enable (us) to witness to (our) faith in prayer and action.'*

What does this mean, and how do we nurture this relationship with God?

Catherine McAuley says, *We may address God as we would a dear friend to whom we owed a great deal.*

For me, addressing God as a dear friend is easier if I picture Jesus as my brother, a brother both fully human and Divine. It is this Jesus that I address in my prayer. This Jesus that dwells within me and brings the gift of the Holy Spirit to me so that my life has meaning and is fully alive. Just as each breath that I take gives me life, God breathes his Love into my soul and blesses me with His many gifts. How could I live without this Divine indwelling?



Do I deserve His great Love and Divine Presence within my heart? Probably not when I look back over my life, full of human weaknesses, flaws, and sin. But the Divine does not judge or keep a record of my past sins, He redeems and sanctifies my soul each day, through His gifts of Faith, Hope, Love and prayer. The Divine is ever faithful and present; wanting me, and urging me, to pray and converse with Him.

If I turn to Catherine's words again, she says, ... *Of all other gifts, prayer must come from God: hence, we must beg it continually, with a profound humility and untiring patience.*

When I surrender the time to it, I find good prayer happens. It is in the serenity of the morning, when the world is quiet, that I feel I can best savour and give this time to God in prayer; in reading and listening to the Divine Word in the scriptures and having an intimate conversation with Jesus.

I know that I benefit from go-slow times spent in prayer.

Whether private or public, our prayer lives are integral to us as Mercy Associates. Prayer remains a sacred and safe space for a meaningful spiritual encounter, wherever and whatever shape that takes.

Without these meaningful spiritual encounters, how would we know and trust in our actions as Mercy Associates?

We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place, centred in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back. In these words from Catherine, we can take heart and trust that our prayer life gives us this centeredness in God.

In conclusion, these words from Catherine resonate with me, *Mental Prayer, or Meditation, has ever been considered most effectual, to imprint deeply on the mind the sublime truths of religion, to elevate the soul, and enflame the heart with the love of God and of Heavenly things. By it the Saints attained perfection in all states. It is the way which they marked out to all who aspire to any degree of sanctity.* (page 306, 'Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy', by Mary C. Sullivan RSM, University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

'I know that I benefit from go-slow times spent in prayer.'

Mercy Friends, Wewak, Papua New Guinea

We, the Mercy Friends here in Wewak, ESP bought some garden foods and visited the hospital and also, we visited some people who were displaced by some young men and youths, who had a fight and burned down the house. We, the Mercy Sisters and Mercy Friends and the principal of Mercy Secondary School with the staff brought some food, clothes and cooking utensils. The people in the hospital

and the families who were displaced were very happy and appreciated our visit to them. This is our little story from last month's visitation.

God bless you all.

Sr Philomena Waira RSM



Gladstone Mercy Associates celebrate 30 year anniversary

On Tuesday 28th June, Gladstone Parish Community celebrated 30 years of Mercy Associate presence in Gladstone. Mass was celebrated in Star of the Sea Church with Father Ashwin Acherya presiding over a congregation of over 40 people. The Mass was a true celebration of this significant milestone and the hymns chosen and beautiful singing made it a memorable occasion.

Mercy Associates in Gladstone was initiated by Sr Maria Goretti rsm. who unfortunately was unable to travel from Rockhampton for the occasion however, Sisters Beryl Amedee rsm (who took over the role as mentor after Sr Maria) and Sr Grace Bartolo rsm travelled to join us. Sr Noreen Dunne smsm, who ministers in Gladstone, also joined in the celebration. There were friends of the Associates with us.

A luncheon was followed in the Harbour Room of the Reef Hotel where many memories were re-lived. Three members of the inaugural Mercy Associates group were present – Norma Reynolds, Trish Lynch and Annette Rowe plus Trish Lindner whose mother was an original member i.e., Pat Keen RIP., and Geraldine Laird, daughter of Nola O'Reilly RIP. The luncheon was enjoyed by 36 Associates and friends. Unfortunately as COVID 19 is still in our midst there were quite a few people who were in isolation and unable to join in the celebration.

Memorabilia and photos of the 30 years was displayed and the resounding 'just who was that' or 'I wonder where she is now' was heard quite frequently. It also brought to mind just how many Associates are now resting in the arms of our heavenly Father.

Most of our Mercy Associates have had the experience of knowing, or being taught by, a Mercy Sister but with the decline in vocations the real task ahead is to continue as a group and to pass on the message of Catherine McAuley to the younger generations. A group of Associates a few years ago travelled to Dublin in Ireland to 'walk in the shoes' of Catherine and yesterday shared their 'never to be forgotten' experience of what that trip meant to them.



Sr Beryl Amedee from Rockhampton with Geraldine Laird, whose mother [Nola O'Reilly] was an original Mercy Associate in Gladstone.



Mercy Associates Annette Rowe, Geraldine Laird and 'Pop' Norman who led the singing at the anniversary Mass with organist Shaneen Carter (also an Associate).



May we continue to **Celebrate** (Gathering Hymn from Mass) as **Companions on the Journey** (Recessional Hymn) today and into an uncertain future.

Annette Rowe

FINDING PEACE IN BALLARAT—A BRAVE HEART AND A BOLD



When Peace Aziawor, 19, arrived in Ballarat in Victoria in 2011 from Togo, West Africa, she was scared, painfully shy and didn't want to be seen as different.

So worried was she about standing out, she asked to not be removed from the classroom at Phoenix College for her one-on-one sessions with her Mercy Connect volunteer, Margaret Adams.

It took her a whole year before agreeing to work together with Margaret in the library.

Fast forward five years, and there is little chance Peace does not stand out. In fact, the full-time dentistry nurse studying for her Certificate III is a star soccer player and has just completed the Rotary Youth Leadership Award Program (RYLA) after being nominated by the Rotary Club of Wendouree Breakfast.

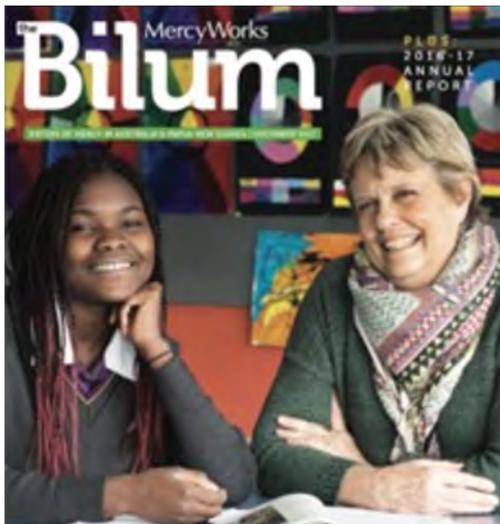
The program is for inspired young adults to unlock their leadership potential, set goals for the future and to challenge themselves personally. Peace says she overcame one of her biggest fears while at the camp.

"RYLA has really taught me what it means to be a leader, not just to a group of people but how to lead yourself on the right path," says Peace.

"I learned how setting goals is really important and mostly I learnt – and had the courage – to get up and speak in front of a group of people, which is a fear of mine.

"I will be taking that step with me if there ever comes a time I have to speak in public!" She still catches up with her mentor Margaret at least once a month.

Peace and Marg as they appeared on our 2017 Bilum Magazine Cover



"I call it if I need help or just to chat about life," she says. "After just a few minutes of talking to her I realised how great a mentor she already was. She was so helpful."

Peace credits Margaret with many of her achievements. "Without Margaret in my life, I honestly wouldn't be where I am today, in my career and just mentally, from helping me with my studies and just being there for me when I needed her."

Margaret, a semi-retired teacher, says mentoring is a two-way street and that Peace has "enriched" her life. "She joined us for a big gathering on Boxing Day and a family lunch for Easter."

Up next, Peace hopes to travel as much as she can "and be happy in my life and my career".

Her advice for any refugee or asylum seeker students arriving at a new school *would be clichéd!* she laughs:



Peace during the RYLA camp

**BE BRAVE, HAVE AN OPEN MIND AND TRUST IT WILL TURN OUT FOR THE BEST.
JUST NEVER GIVE UP, TO NEVER DOUBT YOURSELF –
EVEN THOUGH YOUR MIND TELLS YOU OTHERWISE.**

Rockhampton formation—and who is my neighbour?

On Saturday 11 June, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates celebrated Mass in St Joseph's Cathedral, after which there was morning tea and some 'catch up' with one another, before we listened to a very inspiring presentation by Sister Pat Wood rsm on "Mercy – the business of our lives." (Catherine McAuley).

Sister Pat helped us to deepen our understanding of what *mercy* really means and that we must look beyond the alleviation of individual needs to address the cause of the need for *mercying*.

We reflected upon the parable of *The Good Samaritan* and 'who is my neighbour' and were given time to ponder on who, in today's world is 'lying on the road' and who are the robbers, Priests, Levites and Good Samaritans. We also reflected upon where, in the parable, we would place ourselves.

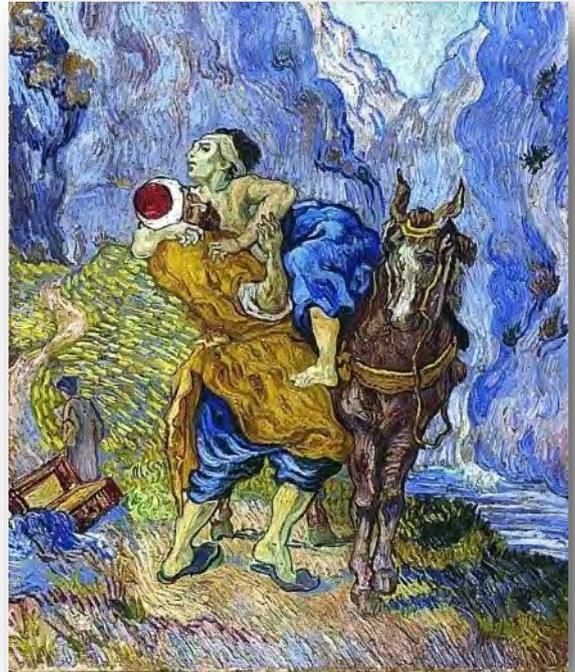
Sister Pat reminded us that by our Baptism, we are called to be Priest, Prophet and King and enabled us to acknowledge that although it takes courage to be God's voice in the world, we do have this choice to try and make a difference. We need also to look at the 'signs of the times' and discover the religious significance in public events, where God may be asking us to intervene. This could be in our church, state, country or even wider afield.

Sister provided some beautiful quotes from our dear Pope Francis, such as "Jesus is the Face of God's Mercy", as well as a prayer from Pope Francis (Easter, 2013):

"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; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish."

It really was a very inspiring and uplifting morning.

We all sincerely thanked Sister Pat for her wonderful presentation.



Vincent Van Gogh, *The Good Samaritan*

Jennifer Loscher



*Jesus is the Face
of
God's Mercy*

Pope Francis

The Story of Mercy among Us

My reflection on 30 Years of Mercy Associates presence in Star of the Sea Gladstone Parish.

Some thirty years ago I remember hearing my Mum, Pat Keen, speak fondly of belonging to the *Mercy Associates* with Sister Maria Goretti and Sister Mary Moyihan and several of her dear friends from the Parish. They would look forward to the monthly gatherings very much. My family being long term Gladstone residents, have always had a loyal and loving relationship with the Mercy Sisters in the schools and through Parish life.

I love to read and hear the sayings of Catherine McCauley, such a guide for our life. The very favourite one is, her advice to offer a 'comfortable cup of tea'. Mum and her friends very definitely delighted in doing exactly that, and we follow their example to this day.

As I commenced Secondary School here in Gladstone, I was one of the Pioneer Students of the now Chanel College, my class of around thirty students had a very special relationship with the Mercy Sisters who guided us in those early teenage years, to becoming young adults. It was a privileged position as we, students and Sisters proudly worked together to form the new College, a bond was formed.

I lived interstate for twenty years, when I returned to Glad-

stone, I happily renewed my friendship with the sisters, and I was proud to become a Mercy Associate as well. When we were asked to choose a hymn recently at an Associate gathering and then celebration Mass, 'Companions on the Journey' speaks so clearly of what being a Mercy Associate means to me. I feel as if I have returned home when I am with these ladies, how wonderful it is to be known, no need to explain who I am, and to see so many familiar faces from my early years, such a blessing.

"Breaking Bread and sharing life and in the love we bear is the hope we share for we believe in the love of our God....no longer strangers to each other.....we are fed and we are nourished by the strength of those who care.... We are called by the Word of the Lord, to act with justice, to love tenderly and walk humbly with our God."

May we all draw on the wisdom and love of Catherine McCauley, our Mercy Sisters and each other as meet and pray together living each day with thanks and love.

In the words of the Prayers of the Faithful used in our 30yr Birthday Mass;

'Merciful God, give us the courage to do what is needed each day, the wisdom to choose what is right and fair and the vision to see what is possible. God of Mercy, Hear Our Prayer. Amen.'

Trish Lindner, Gladstone

I find being a Mercy Associate keeps me focused and grounded each day as I pray for members and myself. Looking at 'Mercy' while washing dishes, or putting clothes away, hanging out washing. I have inserted it into daily tasks just as I did with years of physiotherapy exercises to keep me going. With years of experience behind me I shall have Mercy as my guide. And some poetry to convey my experience of mercy:



Gazing out my door,
the word MERCY
imprinted on brickwork pillar
over post box.

How appropriate
my mind's eye
carries this into waking day.
MERCY made breakfast,
taking meds.

MERCY stared at me during TV's Extraordinary Escapes
shared with Sandi Toksvig and Alison Steadman in Suffolk's amazing brickworks, and
Realising Nurse's dressings on legs were warmers
in Perth's cold snap.

Joyfully bringing to mind my other Associates.
What else does MERCY have in store this day?

Nola Viney, Tuart Hill

The Story of Mercy among Us

Having been involved in teaching for many years in a Mercy School, I feel the Spirit of Mercy was somehow embedded in me by working with some wonderful Mercy Sisters. Over the years the opportunity to be involved in a number of fundraising functions, then more recently the Mercy House of Hospitality, deepened my appreciation of the work of the Mercy Sisters.

Becoming a Mercy Associate and sharing our prayer gatherings and retreat days has enriched me and helped me focus more clearly on The God of my Life.

Ros Trestrail, Tuart Hill, Perth

Part of our Mercy work lies with the volunteer group of Associates who help out when needed at The House of Hospitality.

Recently we experienced the joy of having an African group use The House, partly for their retreat day and celebrating the feast of St Anne, with other community members gathering to share Mass and a meal. They were Zimbabwean, now living in various parts of Perth and Bunbury, the latter a quite large city a couple of hours' drive from Perth.

It was a family day, combined with spiritual activities.

They came in their regalia denoting their group – cloaks and head gear blue for one, fawn for another. I was instantly reminded of the Sodality days of long ago – the Children of Mary and, for the children, the Holy Angels (to which I did not belong - for some unimaginable reasons)!

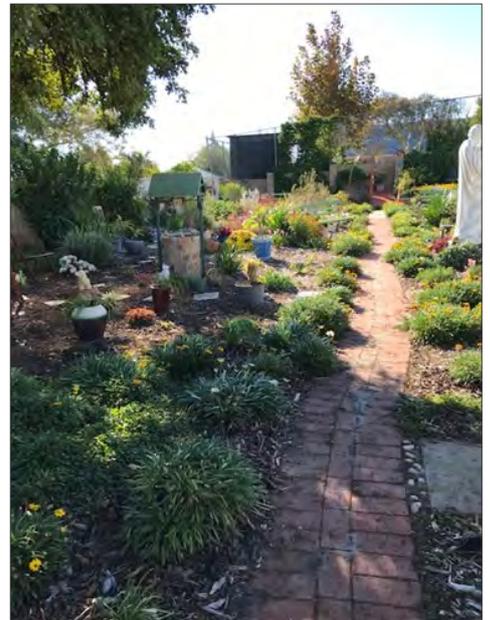
Their joy at being there was palpable.

Each woman came with a container of African food. Not surprisingly I suppose, considering there were a lot of children present, there was not a lot left despite the abundance.

The children, often with parents, as time allowed, were filled with wonder and excitement as they discovered many of the things in *The garden of Peace and Reflection* – here a frog or a spider, there a bird or a gnome...they loved it and no doubt, at appropriate times, those retreating would have used it for contemplation.

Our garden, of which we are very proud, is becoming more well-known and several recent groups have enjoyed spending time there. We look forward to seeing the paths well worn.

Jan O'Connor, Tuart Hill





The Burning Bush
Ex 3:1-12

Listen to the Voice of creation

SEASON OF CREATION 2022

*The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely.
Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.*

Laudato Si 233. Pope Francis

The **Season of Creation** runs from the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation: September 1 to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on October 4. It is a time set aside each year to focus on God's gift of creation and our responsibility to care for it, our common home. Various groups have created prayer and practical resources which may be worth taking up:

Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese, [click here](#)

Caritas, [click here](#)

Catholic Earthcare - Mantra, [click here](#) and Bingo, [click here](#)

Laudato Si' song, [click here](#)

Season of Creation film, [click here](#)

Network Facilitator contact details

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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.

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.

