



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 26, March 2023

Dear Associates and Sisters,

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2023! This edition usually goes out during **Lent**, and that's the case this year. We are mindful during this season of the need to reflect on our lives and strive to draw closer to the God of mercy who loves us without judgement for our failings—true mercy...

The **Mercy Associates Leadership Group** recently held its annual meeting in Sydney. Current members are Annette Rowe, Jo Rix, Linda Brown, Rita Tomba and Margery Jackman. They were joined by Chris, Anne, Marg and myself, along with Sr Philomena Wairasm from Papua New Guinea and Sr Maureen Sexton rsm from the Institute Leadership Team.

Our time was mostly spent completing a **'history line'** project. This isn't a traditional list of 'who, when and where'. Rather, it's a remembering of the things that have happened over the years that have been important in shaping the Mercy Associates community—and Mercy Friends in Papua New Guinea—into groups of individuals who have a personal appreciation of how important merciful living is in their daily lives.

Among the other matters we discussed was the updated/revised **Vision Statement and Vision in Practice**. You may remember that a draft of these was sent in the October edition of *Many Paths*, inviting feedback on how well it expressed the aspirations and lived experience of Mercy Associates. We have taken the feedback into account, and **on the last page of this edition of Many Paths is the newly approved Vision Statement and Vision in Practice**. In the near future we will have these set up for printing and uploaded onto the Mercy Associates page of the ISMAPNG website, so it will be accessible to all Associates and those who might want to learn more about this movement.

We also reviewed the monthly **online prayer gatherings** we commenced in 2020, during the COVID lockdown era. We are mindful that for those who attend, these times of shared prayer are deeply appreciated, but the number participating each month is very small. For a few months, we will pause and not offer these gatherings, and will reconsider this later in the year.

We also sought feedback on the **monthly prayer and reflection resource** we email to group contact people towards the end of each month. These always receive positive feedback, so we are committed to continuing to prepare these and send them out by email. These resources can be used for personal prayer and reflection, or could be the prayer resource your group uses when you gather for a meeting.

Groups sometimes ask if we can refer them to **Mercy resources they can use for formation at meetings**.

We know of some, but you probably do too. If you or your group has used a resource you found especially beneficial, please let me know the name, author and publisher, so we can mention it in these newsletters for the benefit of other groups.

A reminder too that **Les Stewart** from the Ballarat group prepares a monthly resource that contains the **birthdays (day and month, not year!) of Mercy Associates**. This also includes the major feast days of that month. There is something lovely about seeing your name listed with others who share your month of birth. Participation is optional, but please forward your name and day/month of birth to me if you'd like to be included.

Carmel Ross
Executive Officer



Let us then often fly to the foot of the cross, and repose in the wounds of Jesus. He has written us in His hands – shall we not write His wounds on our minds and hearts?

Familiar Instructions of Rev Mother McAuley, St. Louis, 1927. p73.

A NEW BEGINNING: WELCOMING THE ADELAIDE MERCY ASSOCIATES GROUP



Imagine... a beautiful, sunny day on which around thirty Sisters of Mercy and friends, staff members and learners from McAuley Community School have gathered in the school chapel at Hove (a beachside suburb of Adelaide), the branches of a giant gum tree sway gently outside the large window and a group of Year 4, 5 and 6 learners are skilfully directing guests to where they ought to be.

The occasion was the Commitment Ceremony for Mercy Associates Emmy Smyk and Jenny O'Brien. Both parishioners of the Brighton Parish, Emmy and Jenny will join Mandy Bosson who became an Associate in 2020. Jenny has been a Mercy Associate since the early 1990s, but has now reaffirmed her commitment with the ISMAPNG configuration of the Mercy congregation. As both women pronounced their words of promise there was a strong sense of the presence of God the source of all mercy, and of warmth and welcome from the Mercies gathered. This was echoed in the words of Sr Nola Morrissey who accepted the commitments and presented Emmy and Jenny with their Mercy Associate badges and certificates.

It was a time of great joy for all those gathered and came to a close with a shared afternoon tea. Just what Catherine McAuley would have done!

Thanks go to School Principal, Amanda Parslow, for generously allowing us to use the McAuley Chapel and to Emmy who was not only making her commitment as a Mercy Associate but also organised the venue, the learners and the afternoon tea.

May the Mercy Associates of Adelaide thrive and grow and be the face of God's gracious mercy wherever they are.

Jenny O'Brien,
Founding member of the Adelaide Mercy Associates Group

A letter of appreciation to the school from Claudette Cusack rsm:

I am writing to say how impressed I was with our visit to your school today. I was most impressed with the delightful children who greeted us on arrival and served us at the luncheon.

Thank you so much for your kind hospitality and for hosting the ceremony for the Mercy Associates.

Catherine McAuley would be proud to have her name connected to your school.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Claudette Cusack (Sr)

Left photo: Emmy Smyk reading her Statement of Commitment as a Mercy Associate, with **Nola Morrissey rsm** (Community South A Leader at the time of the ceremony)

Right photo: Nola Morrissey rsm congratulates Jenny O'Brien, after Jenny read her Statement of Renewal of Commitment



REFLECTION BY ANNE PATE, MERCY ASSOCIATES NETWORK FACILITATOR (VIC AND SA)

One of the great joys of my role as a Mercy Associates Network Facilitator is to support the emergence of new Mercy Associates groups, as ordinary people experience the call to live and share the mercy of God and to journey with each other and the Mercy Sisters. The three members of the new Adelaide Mercy Associates group found one another through their existing connections in the parish and with the sisters.

For just over a year, I met with them online to explore the story of Catherine McAuley and the sisters together, and to provide a space for each one to discern whether to make a commitment, or renewal of commitment, as a Mercy Associate. To finally meet in person at the Commitment Ceremony which Jenny so beautifully describes, was a wonderful blessing. The support of the local sisters, and the strong bonds of companionship and love between them and Jenny, Emmy and Mandy, were made clear by the presence of so many sisters at the ceremony.

As the Adelaide Mercy Associates group begins to meet and find its own path of mercy, we trust and pray that God's hand will continue to lead them, and that others will be drawn to join them in this new community. Emmy's role as chaplain at McAuley Community School, and the holding of the ceremony there, nurture our hope that some in the school community will experience a call to become Mercy Associates in the future.



L-R: Mandy Bosson, Emmy Smyk, Jenny O'Brien, and Anne Pate at the afternoon tea after the ceremony.

O Christ, as you were lifted up upon the cross,
exposed for all the world to see,
and sneer, and abandon,
give us courage not to abandon
those also exposed
by poverty, unemployment or stigma
to the risk of unprotected living,
and faith to believe that even we
may be born again
in the Spirit of love.

Kathy Galloway



From Mercy Friends in Wewak

Last year Mercy Friends from Papua New Guinea have been doing so many activities. They have been visiting people who have been displaced from their own homes by some people who were involved in drugs, drinking alcohol and home brew and burned down innocent people's homes. They also brought food to the General Hospital in Wewak to feed the sick patients in the wards. Mercy Friends do fund-raising among themselves to raise money to help the people who are in need of food and household items. They also come together quarterly for prayer, reflection and meeting.

Sr Philomena Waira rsm



Mercy Friends in Wewak with Sr Maureen Sexton from the Institute Leadership Team.

GLADSTONE ASSOCIATES PRESENT MERCY LEADERSHIP AWARD AT CHANEL COLLEGE

“Hello” from Gladstone:

Mercy Associates in Gladstone are a particularly vibrant group, as we meet from February to November on the first Saturday of each month.

A speaker at each gathering, from a wide range of areas within our community, both educates us and very often inspires us with their stories of following Christ in Faith.

The prayer list is updated each month, as we pray for each other and for those who are ill or suffering grief.

Sharing “WOW” moments is often a call to be aware of happenings, deeds, and times when we become aware of the love and compassion that is the Mercy way.

On behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, Annette Platt and Annette Rowe, presented the ‘*Mercy Leadership Award*’ last November at the Graduation Mass at Chanel College, to two students [Zarah Nash and Michael Matherson-Close] who characterised Leadership within the realm of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

Leonie Johnson



Mercy Associates Annette Platt (L) and Annette Rowe (R) with award recipients Zarah Nash and Michael Matheson-Close.

BALLARAT PLANNING A BUSY YEAR—35TH ANNIVERSARY COMING UP!

The end of 2022 and start of 2023 has been a busy time for the Ballarat Associates.

The final meeting of the Coordinating Group in 2022 was an opportunity for both review and planning. The meeting had two focuses:

1. reflected on the first year of the shared leadership model.
2. the development of the 2023 Calendar.

The overwhelming feeling of the group was that the model had been a great success. The two major strengths identified were;

- ♦ sharing workload
- ♦ the provision of a “Sounding Board” for planning.

After much discussion a Calendar for 2023 was developed. **2023 will be a significant year for our group as it marks our 35th anniversary.**

2022 concluded with a very successful Christmas Celebration/Fundraiser. Eighteen members gathered to share a meal and to spread the true Christmas spirit via donations to Mercy Works Christmas Appeal.

Our first gathering of 2023 was a luncheon during which we were able to distribute our calendar and mark the beginning of our celebrations of 35 years of Ballarat Mercy Associates. There were sixteen members in attendance, including Ann Coswello, who is the only remaining member of the founding group.



On Friday 3rd March most Associates were tuned into ABC's, "Gardening Australia" as it featured the Woookarung Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail. This is of great significance to Ballarat Associates as one of our members, Anne Tudor OAM and her wife Edie Mayhew, who sadly passed in 2020, initiated its development.

Helen Smith, Ballarat

Dhiel Yen, a young mum who is the beneficiary of a **Mercy Works Tertiary Scholarship Program**, believes she was always destined to work with children and adults with a disability.

Currently volunteering with Callan Service for the Disabled, Dhiel is hoping to secure a future in a paid position as a Community Health Worker.

When she was a baby, a local woman with a disability, who she grew to love very much, minded her while her mother worked full time as a schoolteacher.

"I think I enjoy working with children and adults who have special needs because of my own story," Dhiel says. "I really enjoy the work. Some people have Down syndrome, learning difficulties, blindness and cerebral palsy and I assist them with physical exercises."

"They so often laugh and are very happy people! I especially enjoy visiting the homes of those who cannot go out. Often family members are really shy about their loved one's special needs. If the person is bored at home, I play them a movie on my mobile phone and sometimes I assist the teacher with the children in the classrooms."

Dhiel attended St Gabriel's Technical Secondary School in Kiunga and completed Year 12 before applying for a scholarship to study to be a Community Health Worker at Rumginae Tertiary College, on the advice of **Mercy Works** Kiunga Coordinator, Steven Dude. She proudly graduated in 2022 and is currently waiting to receive her licence.

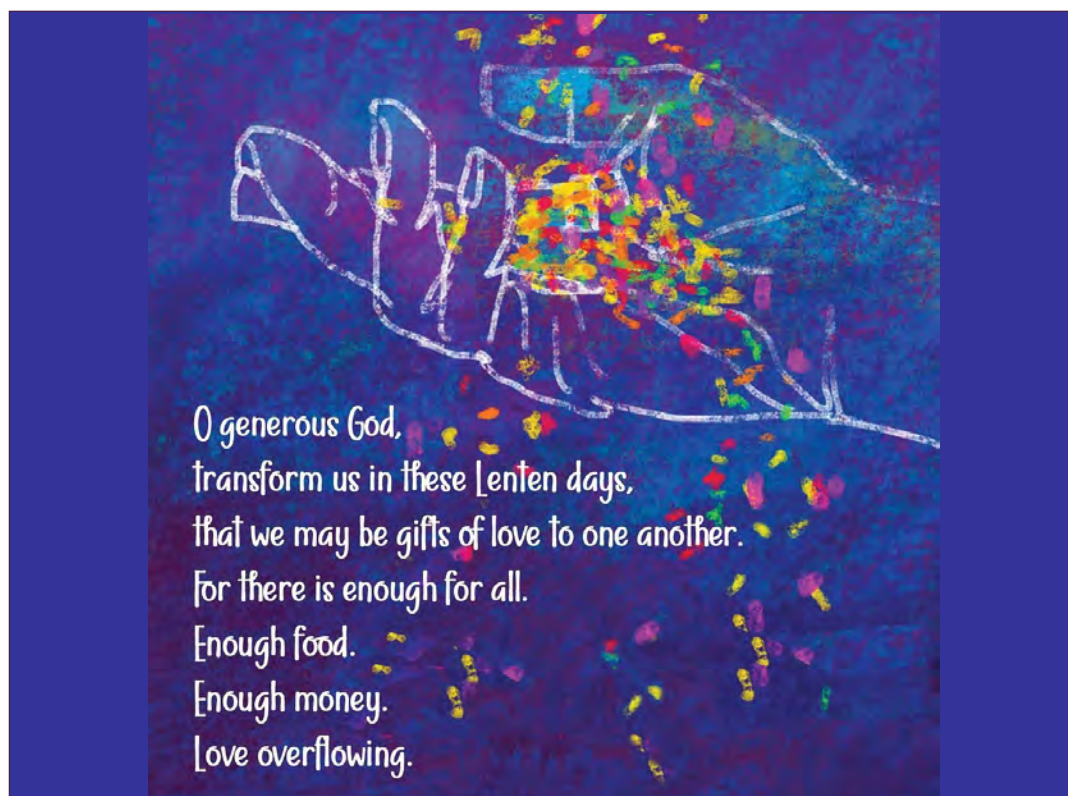
One boy, who is blind and comes to Callan Services, has especially captured her heart. The boy's grandfather looks after him as his mother died and his father left, taking his twin abled sister with him.

"He loves singing, and given that he cannot see, I find it amazing that he can catch a ball! His sense of hearing often compensates for his lack of sight."



Dhiel Yen says she was always destined to work with children and adults with a disability.

Jo Casamento, Mercy Works



*Jamberoo Abbey
Facebook page,
6 March 2023*

Laudato Si' Action Platform Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

The seven goals of the seven-year action platform currently being undertaken by seven Catholic sectors, has the aim of us all living within Earth's limits, and enabling life in all forms to flourish. **Goal 6, Ecological Spirituality**, has become a major focus of inquiry as this goal serves as a main motivating and sustaining force by which all other goals can be reached. Many in the Institute have been working in this field for decades and an effort has now been made to collect these varied resources in this area to make them freely available to all.

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis writes:

*Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. **We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it...*** (LS 139).

We often hear this quoted and say again and again that we are 'part of nature' but do we really feel that way most of the time?

First Peoples traditionally experience this and their way of life is shaped accordingly. We non-Indigenous peoples are also capable of experiences close to this. However, since we were not raised aware of this reality, we usually need not only prayer but very frequent practices in ecological spirituality to remind us.

The Dicastery of Integral Human Development describes **the purpose of Goal 6**: *To recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation.*

Ecological Spirituality Resources Online

In our ongoing commitment to Laudato Si', Institute members have developed a number of resources in all of the seven categories below. We share them freely to encourage others to join us in developing ecological spirituality practices and prayer. As we develop more resources, we will update this page with new offerings to support Goal 6. You can visit this site here: <https://institute.mercy.org.au/laudato-si/laudato-si-goal-6-ecological-spirituality/>

How to use this site

We encourage the use of the resources of this site for individuals and groups. Some resources are stand-alone and may be used as a complete ritual or prayer. Others may be seen as building blocks to create your own original resources (e.g. you may wish to take the words of a poem, crediting the poet, and put them to your own music and images).

For each of these resources we offer the following suggestions for entering into a fully present, reverent space:

Become still and aware of our surroundings, our bodies, our breath and divine presence

Allow plenty of silence in the beginning, end and during the ritual or prayer

When there is an invitation to share, it may be helpful to create plenty of space and time around each sharing, allowing all voices to be heard.



Please Contribute!

If you have a favourite practice, poem, song, meditation, etc that could be part of the Goal 6 resource page, we would be very happy to include it. Please email sally.neaves@ismapng.org.au

Sally Neaves,

Integral Ecology Animator, Mission Ministry
Resource Coordinator

ISMAPNG

OCEANS, DOLPHINS AND A 'WOW' FOR OUR CREATOR GOD!

A couple of weeks ago, my husband and I had a short holiday break in Bunbury, a coastal city about 175 km south of Perth. We try to do this each year, as I love visiting The Dolphin Discovery Centre. The Centre, located on picturesque Koombana Bay helps promote conservation, education and Research about the wild dolphins in the area.

Our first day there was a bit overcast with quite strong winds blowing. Sadly no dolphins.

They preferred to stay out in the bay in calm waters not getting blown around like I was.

I spent time just reflecting on the beauty of the ocean, the cloud patterns in the sky and our amazing God who helps us come awake to creation.

In the evening we attended Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral and enjoyed seeing the 14 painted windows depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament.

Day 2. Weather was similar so we chose to drive along the coast, just enjoying the ocean views, and then late in the afternoon we watched the amazing colours in the sky as the sun sank slowly into the ocean. Again a lovely time to reflect. There is a saying that looking at a sunset is 'looking at God as an artist with nature as His Masterpiece.'

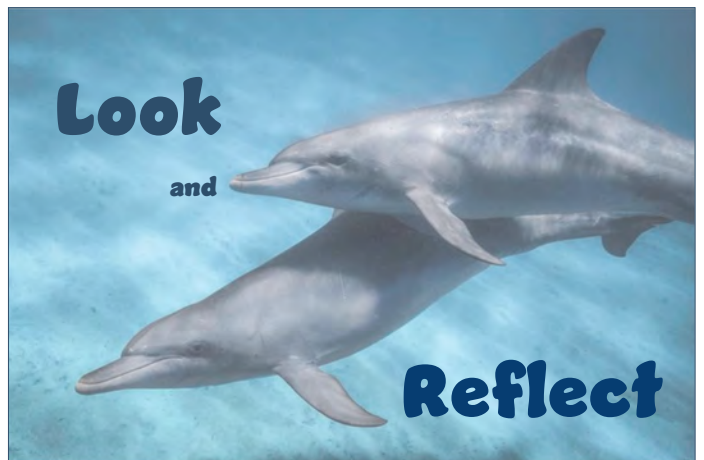
Day 3. Warm, sunny day. I parked the car and wandered along the path trying to be present in the moment and see God's hand in everything ... and silently asking God to 'get a few dolphins to come in to the shore.' As I got closer to

the Dolphin Discovery Centre a crowd was forming and the staff leaders were heading into the ocean. A WOW moment ... three dolphins swimming right up into the shallow water, diving around close to the excited crowd. Although, (sensibly) no-one is allowed to touch the dolphins, they cruised very close by. Certainly seemingly enjoying us around them. The excitement of the crowd was shared as people chatted and took photos.



Such simple pleasures bringing spiritual enrichment found in Nature. It was a good reminder to me ... that I just need to take more time to **Look and Reflect**.

Ros Trestrail, Tuart Hill, Perth



I'm delighted to add a little note to Ros' lovely, sensitive and spiritually enhancing article. It gives us a little nudge to be more aware of the beauty with which God has surrounded us. How appropriate, as we move through the weeks of Lent, that God would remind us of our interconnectedness with nature, as the dolphins 'knowingly' 'dived close to the excited crowd, seemingly enjoying us around them'.

I hope you enjoy the article and that it calls you to enter into its message.

Jan O'Connor, Tuart Hill, Perth



Look at the birds ¹

Consider the lilies ²

Drink ye all of it ³

Ask ⁴

Seek

Knock

Enter by the narrow gate ⁵

Do not be anxious ⁶

Judge not; ⁷ do not give dogs what is holy ⁸

Go: be it done for you ⁹

Do not be afraid ¹⁰

Maiden, arise ¹¹

Young man, I say, arise ¹²

Stretch out your hand ¹³

Stand up, ¹⁴ be still ¹⁵

Rise, let us be going ... ¹⁶

Love ¹⁷

Forgive ¹⁸

Remember me

1 Matthew 6:26. See also Luke 12:24, "Consider the ravens."

2 Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:27.

3 "Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26:27). Norris uses the King James translation here.

4 This stanza is a series of Jesus's commands from the Sermon on the Mount: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7, King James; also Luke 11:9).

5 Matthew 7:13-14; also Luke 13:23-24.

6 Matthew 6:25, 31; Luke 12:22, 29.

7 Matthew 7:1; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:37-38.

8 Matthew 7:6.

9 Matthew 8:13.

10 "Do not be afraid" – a frequent command by Jesus; for example, Matthew 10:31; 14:27; 17:7; 28:10.

11 The healing of Jairus's daughter: "Little girl, get up!" (Mark 5:41; also Luke 8:54).

12 The healing the widow's only son; Luke 7:14.

13 The healing of the man with the withered hand: Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.

14 Jesus's healing the paralyzed man: Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

15 Jesus's command to the ocean: Mark 5:39; also Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:24.

16 Jesus to his disciples in Gethsemane: "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:46; Mark 14:42).

17 Jesus's two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39; also Mark

12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28).

18 Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:4.

<https://www.trinitysj.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Poems-for-Lent-and-Holy-Week.pdf>



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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.

Vision Statement

Mercy Associates are called to live and share the mercy of God.

We are women and men inspired by the life of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture, and by the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.

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

- ◆ celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love
- ◆ nurture our relationship with God
- ◆ witness to our faith in prayer and action, giving expression to God's mercy under the guidance of the Holy Spirit
 - in response to the needs of these times
 - in the ordinariness of our daily lives
 - and in right relationship with all of creation.
- ◆ journey with each other and in companionship with the Sisters of Mercy.

Vision in Practice

Mercy Associates form faith communities in which to nurture and live out together the charism and mission of mercy.

We deepen our participation in the mission of Mercy by:

Growing as a just and compassionate community who:

- ◆ Pray together
- ◆ Participate in formation through engagement with the ongoing stories of God's mercy, Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy
- ◆ Develop a reflective, mindful perspective on Mercy and Justice issues
- ◆ Discern social needs and issues, including calls for Mercy ministry support
- ◆ Celebrate significant Mercy dates and occasions locally and across the Institute
- ◆ Participate in gatherings and pilgrimages to Mercy places of heritage – local, regional, national and international
- ◆ Support the public voice of ISMAPNG on justice issues.

Ensuring a balance between contemplation and action in the Mercy tradition, by:

- ◆ Nurturing a spirit of prayer individually and at all gatherings
- ◆ Discerning actions by drawing on scripture, mercy tradition, and life experiences
- ◆ Responding with prayer and action to the discerned needs of our time
- ◆ Developing a culture within the group that respects and encourages this balance.

Final—adopted 5 March 2023