

Endings and Beginnings

The seasons of the liturgical year immerse us in a journey full of endings, but also new beginnings. Perhaps we feel the interplay of these movements most intensely in the season of Easter which culminates in the celebration of Pentecost Sunday. We all know the rhythm of endings and beginnings in our daily lives, as well.

In the Easter season, Jesus comes and goes, often appearing suddenly among the disciples, before “vanishing from their sight” (Luke 24:31). Poet Malcolm Guite imagines the Ascension from the perspective of Jesus’ followers, who “saw his light break through the cloud of glory while we were rooted still in time and place”. The mystery of their, and our, continuing relationship with the risen Christ is that although he is no longer physically present on earth, his light remains in us, and our light remains in him. In Guite’s evocative words, “we saw him go and yet we were not parted, he took us with him to the heart of things”. In one sense, Christ “leaves” us and is taken away into Heaven, but in another sense, he is given to us and to the world in a new and more universal way.

Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders, showing the strong bonds of love they shared, is a touching and very human example of the pain we can feel when things come to an end.



Acts 20: 36-38

When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.

Take a moment now to ponder –

What is your experience of “endings”? What helps you to stay hopeful amidst change, especially when the change is not of your choosing?

How has your Mercy Associates community experienced endings - and new beginnings too?

“We need wisdom to recognise that the pain of endings precedes every new beginning in our lives.

Take courage therefore, and place your trust in God.”

Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d’Houet, founder of the Faithful Companions of Jesus

Anne Pate, Mercy Associates Network Facilitator (Victoria), May 2023

From our mercy story, we often recall Catherine's words as she lay dying:

"Will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup of tea ... when I am gone and to comfort one another."

Letter of Mary Vincent Whitty to Cecilia Marmion, quoting Catherine McAuley



Perhaps you have heard these words so often that they no longer catch your attention. Yet there is something profound in Catherine's care for others. Her tender concern and regard for her community was fundamental to her character, persisting even as her death drew near. Elizabeth Moore remembered that at "about seven she desired the Sisters to be brought to her, said to each one individually what was most suited", and that "her first and last injunction to all was to preserve union and peace amongst each other". Letter of Elizabeth Moore to Mary Ann Doyle, 21st November 1841

Catherine died as she had lived, full of mercy, faith - and hope for the future of the congregation she had founded.

We too are called to carry on, to be open in trusting faith to new beginnings, even as we live through the pain of the many endings in our lives. At the celebration of Pentecost, we remember that we are sent into the world, just as the Apostles were sent.

Jesus prayed to the Father "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

Pentecost, Mark Wiggin



This simple prayer captures our desire to be open to the gifts of each new day –

I Greet the Morning

I greet the morning.
Whether awake or sleepy.
Refreshed or restless.
Hopeful or sullen.

I greet the morning.
The sunrise.
The fresh air.
The opportunity for a new beginning.

I greet the morning and offer all that will be to you my loving God.

"For all that has been, I say "thanks".

And all that will be, I say "yes"."

Joe Shadle with end quote by Dag Hammarskjöld

Anne Pate, Mercy Associates Network Facilitator (Victoria), May 2023