



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 29, December 2023

## Dear Associates and Sisters,

Welcome to the November edition of **Many Paths!** This will be the final Many Paths for 2023, and it's timely to celebrate our **Mercy Associates Honorary.**

**Mercy Associates Honorary** have usually been Mercy Associates for many years. With advancing years, their health and/or mobility no longer allow them to continue to attend meetings of their groups. Yet, they are very keen to remain as Mercy Associates because it's become a part of their identity over the years.

In this edition, we have articles from Townsville and Tuart Hill (Perth) about recent ceremonies where Honorary certificates were presented.

One important thing about our Honorary Associates is the focus of their ministry. When they were active in their group, they may have been participating in a ministry that involved serving others. **Now, as Mercy Associates Honorary, their ministry is one of prayer.**

At our last team meeting a couple of weeks ago, Chris, Anne, Marg and I discussed what we understand prayer to be. I posed the question: **What are you praying for?** The range of possible answers is wide indeed. There is the profound prayer of being in silence with God, the kind of surrender Catherine might be referring to in the *Suscipe*. And there are prayers of intercession, where our hearts are heavy with concern for someone, a situation, etc., and we pray that God's grace might be experienced by those involved.

The previous Abbot of New Norcia, a Benedictine monastery is rural WA, The Most Rev Placid Spearritt OSB, once made the comment:

## Prayer doesn't change God. It changes us.

In the English publication, *The Tablet*, an article by James Martin SJ was published in 2021, entitled 'Nine reasons to pray'. The reasons given were:

- ◆ God wants to be in a relationship with you
- ◆ We want to be in a relationship with God
- ◆ We have to
- ◆ We are in need
- ◆ Prayer helps us
- ◆ Prayer allows us to unburden ourselves
- ◆ To praise God
- ◆ Solidarity, when we pray with others
- ◆ To be transformed.

In fact, most of these reasons are about us and our human and spiritual needs, but the first one is worth contemplating—we are at our best when we build a relationship with God through prayer.

In this edition, there is an article by Sr Madeline Duckett rsm on the *Contemplative Evolution Network*, which she is part of. You might also want to consider connecting with this group.

## Farewell and Thank You to Anne Pate

This will be the final newsletter to go out with Anne as a member of our team. Based in Victoria, Anne has made an invaluable contribution to the Mercy Associates community, but at the end of January, will leave us to take up a new opportunity with Wellspring, continuing the formation work at which she excels.

Anne, we thank you and wish you happiness and success.

**Carmel Ross,** Executive Officer



We may address God as we would a dear friend to whom we owed a great deal.

## Mercy Foundress Catherine McAuley—a painting by Jen Norton

This painting shows Catherine McAuley embracing the work she created – the doors of Baggot Street in Dublin; the women Catherine helped from her time to the present day; the background of the green fields of Ireland; holding a comfortable pot of tea, depicting the ever-present value of hospitality; and the ships taking the Mercy charism around the world. You can also see some of the words of Catherine’s Suscipe prayer within the spread of her cloak. I like to think the depiction of both night and day in the background depicts that God’s Mercy is ever present in this world.

A word about the artist:

In her own words Jen Norton says, *I am passionate about colour and pattern and stories with meaning. I am an Artist. If it weren’t for art, I might never be able to share my story. Without art, you probably wouldn’t hear me anyway.* Painfully shy as a child, Jen was unable to communicate with anyone outside her family except through drawing. Visual language was her first language, and she never lost her passion for its ability to communicate for her.

There was never a day she ‘decided’ to become an artist. For Jen, there was just no other way to be: *I don’t make art because I’ve been endowed with some divine knowledge that I must bestow on humanity. I create in order to figure out my own truths and story. I create to understand. I choose beauty over fear. Somewhere in the telling and making and sharing, a purpose has begun to emerge, and that makes all the difference.*

Read more at <https://www.jennortonartstudio.com>

Image used by licence from Jennifer Norton

*My intent in my painting and design is to:*

*honour the characteristics of the quieter side of the heart: Wisdom, Service, Stillness, and Generosity.*

*inspire Commitment and Service to Home and Family as essential elements of a strong community and peaceful world.*

*remind us all that Love is a Decision, not a feeling. It took me a long time to learn this, but once I did, everything else made sense.*

*show that God is present in the details, the everyday things we do on the way to wherever we think we’re going.*

*tell my story so you can tell yours, so we both know we’re not alone.*

**Christine Convery, NSW Network Facilitator**





## HONORARY ASSOCIATES WELCOMED—TUART HILL & TOWNSVILLE

Our group has recently been blessed with the very special addition of our first Mercy Associate Honorary, **Eileen Barker** (photo at right). At 89 and looking forward to her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Eileen was very happy to be made an Honorary of our group.

We had originally planned that the ceremony would be part of our next Associate gathering. However, when it came to the time, Eileen had been sick and was in and out of hospital, causing a cancellation of the first appointment for the little ceremony.

Not to be deterred, Sr Carmel Daley, local (and always obliging) community leader, who was to present the Certificate, agreed that it could happen in Eileen's home. This was the perfect solution for Eileen.

So finally, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, in a simple, but joy-filled little ceremony, Eileen became our first Honorary Associate and was presented with her Certificate by Sr Carmel.

This acknowledgement of the Mercy connection and of Eileen's service to Mercy as a whole was highlighted in a very real way. When I asked her how long she had been connected to the Sisters of Mercy she said – 'Since I was six'. She had been educated by them and her own children had attended Mercy schools. She continued her support of the sisters when the children were grown up and then, for many years, was an Associate. I think acknowledgment of involvement from age 6 to 89 is very appropriate and we are very proud of her achievement. We welcome her as an Honorary with love and joy.

Congratulations Eileen!



Jan O'Connor, Tuart Hill, Perth

One of our Sisters took time to present some Honorary Certificates recently. Imelda is a long-time friend of Una and a weekly Eucharistic Minister who assisted in taking photos. The brother of Sr Carmel King, Robert, has recently passed away and on this occasion, Sr Carmel King was unable to present the Certificate to Una. However she wrote a moving account of Una's involvement in Mercy:

*Una King was first attracted to Mercy Associates through friendship with Sr M. Leo Foley RIP, and Sr Carmel Arnold when she lived in Bowen. For many years she was very committed and played a very active role in the local group. On retiring she moved to Townsville where she continued to participate as far as her declining health would allow. She is one of a number of Associates whose major apostolate now is to support the Sisters and works of Mercy through her prayer.*

*Congratulations and thank you Una. May God continue to work in you and through you.*



Sr Catherine has also recently presented an Honorary Associate Certificate to the widow of Mr Brian Hooper who has recently passed away. Brian had been a long-time supporter of the Sisters of Mercy and the Mercy Associates. Brian's widow has kindly accepted the Honorary Associate Certificate on his behalf to keep with Brian's documents.

Rita Tomba, Townsville

Left: Sr Catherine Cuddihy presenting a certificate to Una King

Right: Una with her friend Imelda Zoller

## From Anne...



It is with great sadness but also deep gratitude for blessings received that I will be moving on from the role of Mercy Associates Network Facilitator at the end of January 2024. The past six years have been a wonderful immersion in mercy, accompanied by many lovely Associates, staff and sisters. The team of facilitators has grown to four – Carmel, Chris, Marg and myself – and we have benefited from strong links with the Institute's Leadership Team and with Mercy Associates communities across Australia and PNG. We have also dealt with the challenges of Covid and lockdowns, prompting us to venture online, setting up prayer gatherings and online Mercy Associates groups. Particular highlights for me have included establishing and being part of the Mercy Zoomers group, supporting the new group in Adelaide, meeting annually with the Mercy Associates Leadership Group, visiting the small but committed group in Apollo Bay, and celebrating thirty-five years of Ballarat Mercy Associates.

I am moving on to become Program Director with WellSpring Centre in Melbourne, leading and teaching in the spiritual companionship (direction) and contemplative practice formation programs. As I imagine how the next stage of my journey will unfold, I am thankful for all of you and for Catherine McAuley, who dared to imagine a new response to the call to mercy in her context. My prayers are with the Mercy Associates movement as it continues to adapt and evolve today.

**Anne Pate, Mercy Associates Network Facilitator, Victoria**

## The God We Hardly Knew

No one can celebrate  
a genuine Christmas  
without being truly poor.  
The self-sufficient, the proud,  
those who, because they have  
everything, look down on others,  
those who have no need  
even of God - for them there  
will be no Christmas.

Only the poor, the hungry,  
those who need someone  
to come on their behalf,  
will have that someone.  
That someone is God.  
Emmanuel. God-with-us.  
Without poverty of spirit  
there can be no abundance of God.

**Óscar Romero**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

John 1:1-5



Salvatore Dali, The Nativity



# Mercy Friends Formation Day in Kunjingini

Greetings to you from Papua New Guinea.

Mercy Friends in PNG have been doing so many Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy in four different parishes, they are:

- ◆ Kunjingini Parish,
- ◆ Kaugia Parish,
- ◆ Bapmu Parish and
- ◆ Yarapos Parish!

And in:

- ◆ Mercy Secondary School and
- ◆ St Benedict Divine Word campus.

They have been helping people who have been victims of violence and natural disasters by donating household items and foods. Also they visited sick patients in the hospital and clinics and prisoners in the prison by bringing food to them and praying with them.

After doing all these activities the Mercy Friends decided to finish the year with an input on Mercy Spirituality and Charism. So the groups invited Srs Theresia Tina and I, Philomena to go to Kunjingini and gave them input on the Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy. They were about 40 participants: 39 were women and one man. They were very happy to hear about the Spirituality and Charism of Sisters of Mercy.

The input was on the weekend of the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. Sr Theresia Tina facilitated and we finished the weekend with the Eucharistic celebration of Christ the King Feast day. As you can see, here are some of the pictures of our gathering.

**Sr Philomena Waira RSM**





## A new journey, with Catherine as a guide...

I had taken a course by correspondence about the Catholic Faith by Father White from the Catholic Leader. This led to further instructions and eventually to me becoming Catholic in 1962. In 1970, my husband, two little boys and I moved to Gladstone. The following years, we added another son and daughter to the family. We raised our family and became very active in the Parish community for the next 33 years. My husband John passed away in 2003. He was a very good man. He had wonderful faith and belief in God. Sr Beryl Amedee rsm invited me to become a Mercy Associate in 2004.

In September this year, I left Gladstone and moved to Cairns to be near my daughter and her family. The following Sunday, I moved into a convalescent home. Strange place, strange people, strange City, so alone, a loneliness so different, that I had never experienced before. So, I began questioning my life and existence, and why was I at this stage in my life?

Praying to God was my escape and just lead me to a strange and stronger knowledge of the presence of God, and that he is always with me. I will 'never' be alone.

As I settled into feeling my way, I have drawn on **Catherine's life experiences** which have given me directions to serve, using my simple gift of faith and love for God. I spend time praying for the guests that are in the final stages of Parkinson's Disease and mental disorders. I also read the paper to a blind lady who wanted to die two weeks ago. I was asked if I would speak to a new resident who is having trouble settling in. My life has purpose and joy.

*Catherine, help me.*

*St Joseph, pray for me.*

**Tricia Lynch, Gladstone**



*Tricia with the Gladstone group. She is seated in the centre front.*

## Raffia Circle Weaving at Ballarat



Seven Ballarat Associates gathered to share a cup of tea and enjoy each others company whilst learning a new skill.

The group were introduced to the age old technique of circle weaving. They proved to be fast learners and by the end of the two hour session all were well on their way with their first item.

All agreed it was a relaxing way to spend a windy but sunny August Day.

**Helen Smith, Ballarat**

## Remembrance Day gathering in Rockhampton

On Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates gathered for a very inspirational morning. It was Remembrance Day, for which we held a minute's silence as a sign of respect and reflection for those who made the ultimate sacrifice fighting to protect our freedom. But it was also the anniversary of the death of our founder and spiritual inspiration Catherine McAuley, another wonderful opportunity to reflect. She died in 1841, five years before the first Sisters of Mercy came to Australia to carry on her work and vision, and this was a time to reflect on our own commitment to the work of the Mercy Associates.

We began with a celebration of Mass at St Joseph's Cathedral with a beautiful liturgy of prayer and music. Father Alex Varghese inspired and encouraged us, as always, to promote the vision and spirit of our founder.

A morning tea followed where we enjoyed a brief catch up with one another before a very uplifting and enlightening presentation by two teachers from our local Catholic High School, The Cathedral College (TCC). Alice Galea and Jacinta Taske presented jointly, sharing photos and personal reflections from their August trip overseas as part of the Diocesan pilgrimage from Rockhampton for World Youth Day (WYD). WYD was started by Pope John Paul II as a chance for young people to gather together from all over the globe to worship together, celebrate the Catholic faith and become inspired to carry home Christ's light to the world.

About 20 young people were led by Bishop Michael McCarthy and other Catholic leaders first to Avila, Segovia and Salamanca in Spain and then to Lisbon, Portugal, where they gathered with almost two million others from every corner of the

globe.

Both Alice and Jacinta shared how they truly received the Holy Spirit in ways they had never imagined and quite literally learnt the difference between being a pilgrim and a tourist. Along with visits to holy sites and hearing Masses said by Pope Francis and others, they participated in pilgrimage walks including a kneeling walk at Fatima, where they attended a 3-day retreat.

Hearing from both these young women how it felt to be surrounded by so many others seeking to deepen their faith and grow closer to Christ was genuinely inspirational. We were all very grateful for the privilege and opportunity to learn through their experience and reflect on how we can continue to be inspired to carry on 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 for Christmas lunch in a few weeks' time.

**Kerry Gruber Vella, Rockhampton**



### 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.

### Network Facilitator contact details

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## Prayer with the Contemplative Evolution Network

The Contemplative Evolution Network (CEN) was begun by a Sister of Mercy and is now maintained via a team of people. Its website: [Home - Contemplative Evolution Network](#) invites others to become part of a growing network of people seeking to change the violent, hurting situations in our world through the power of contemplative prayer together, thus helping to evolve the world through Love.

We believe in the power of prayer, especially with others. This is affirmed by the scientific discoveries of recent times that energy goes where intention is directed and can affect change even at a distance. As members of the CEN we hold the time between 4 and 5 pm

each day as a sacred time of united prayer and loving focus seeking to change situations of violence, oppression or need in our own lives and in the larger world.

This prayer time does not necessarily require physical presence. People – alone or with others – pray silently, for all or part of the hour, holding in God’s healing love, situations of personal concern. Those who cannot pray at this time can link their minds and hearts with others who are doing so via intention, joining even momentarily with those who are engaged in more focused prayer.

**Madeline Duckett rsm**

One of our great struggles with prayer is that it’s not easy to trust that prayer makes a difference. We watch the evening newscasts, see the entrenched polarization, bitterness, hatred, self-interest, and hardness of heart that are seemingly everywhere, and we lose heart. How do we find the heart to pray in the face of this? What, inside of our prayer, is going to change any of this? While it is normal to feel this way, we need this important reminder: **prayer is most important and most powerful precisely when we feel it is most hopeless – and we are most helpless.**

**Ron Rolheiser omi**, Facebook,  
28 October 2023



Give ear to my words, O Lord;  
give heed to my sighing.  
Listen to the sound of my cry,  
my King and my God,  
for to you I pray.  
O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice;  
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

Psalms 5

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

*Romans 8:26-27*

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

*Matthew 18:19-20*



# A REMARKABLE PILGRIMAGE TO THREE COUNTRIES

## *The Holy Land*

In April this year I visited the Holy Land with a group from Ireland. We flew to Tel Aviv and from there we went to Nazareth where Jesus lived. Seeing the actual place of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was quite remarkable.

During the week we were in the Holy Land we visited all the places Jesus had been familiar with, i.e., the Sea of Galilee (where we had Mass on a boat), Jerusalem, River Jordan, where we were all baptised again), and then we walked the same route Jesus took to Calvary, where he was crucified.

We visited so many Holy sites during our week there (*photos top row below*), it was like living the gospel.

## *The Camino in Northern Spain*

We flew to Santiago de Compostela. Each morning our coach dropped us to the starting point of the walk for that day. We walked between 17km and 25km per day for 5 days. Our coach picked us up when we had finished our daily walk. Needless to say, we were all exhausted!

On the sixth day and having walked over 100km over the previous days, I decided I would like to attend Mass in the beautiful Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. It was quite spectacular the way the incense is swung from one side of the Cathedral to the other (*photo lower right, me in the middle*).

## *Knock in Ireland*

I visited Knock for two days in May of this year. Knock attracts lots of visitors, not only Irish people, but also people worldwide to pray where the apparition of Our Lady took place in 1879. Following the apparition, miraculous cures have been reported (*photo lower left*).

Noeleen Kirwan, NSW East Coasters



## A New Initiative: Mercy Works in Remote PNG

For over twelve years, Mercy Works has dedicated its efforts to assisting those struggling in the challenging environment of the remote western Diocese of Daru-Kiunga, Papua New Guinea. In February 2023, the recommendations from a recent Evaluation Report were discussed at a pivotal meeting held in Kiunga town. In attendance were key members of the Mercy Works team including Sally Bradley RSM, Executive Director, local leaders, and Vicar General, Fr Andrew.

“During the gathering, it became evident that the West Papuan refugees residing within the Diocese confront shattering hardships and are among the most impoverished and disadvantaged in the world,” Sally reported. After fleeing their homeland during the resistance fight against Indonesian occupation in the early 80s, these resilient people settled in two main areas of unwanted and unforgiving land: Iowara, comprising 18 villages, and the Down Fly River, often referred to as the 'Border Villages' which includes ten more communities. It is within this locality that the seeds of the new initiative were planted.

In partnership with the local population, Mercy Works and the Diocese have embarked on a journey to launch a **Livelihood Program** with the primary goal of addressing the root causes of poverty and elevating living standards. In July 2023, the program officially began, and will have a strong emphasis on sustainable livelihoods, agriculture, health, and education. It represents a beacon of promise for those who have endured the harshest realities of life.

The need for community mobilisation with leadership capability building was considered as essential to empowering leaders to help drive positive change within their own communities. So, to finalise activities that will occur during the program, each participating village was visited, briefed on program offerings, and consulted on what aspects would be of most value to them.

A key component will be skills training encompassing a wide spectrum of endeavours from improved farming practices to financial and small enterprise management alongside income-generating ventures. Tony Karolus, Program Coordinator, affirmed that the visits had seen visible enthusiasm “we have identified and collected lists of names for fish nets, sewing and seed distribution and contact persons for the exchange of information and communication. The communities have already planned training dates.”

Additionally, the formation of local savings and credit groups (also known as microfinancing loans) will seek to instil a culture of saving and offer ongoing access to funds, ensuring financial stability.

The challenges are undeniable, but the determination to overcome them is even stronger.

The significance of the program lies not only in the tangible improvements it will provide but also in the intangible sense of optimism it will instil in the hearts of those it touches.

For more information, visit [www.mercyworks.org.au](http://www.mercyworks.org.au)



Danielle Hayes, MercyWorks



*People from Kaikok Village were interested in skills training in fishing, sewing, farming, as well as duck and pig raising. Fishing, sewing and seeds will be distributed to the community.*



# Launch of *Laudate Deum*

On the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Pope Francis released *Laudate Deum*, 'Praise God,' an addendum to his 2015 Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This new Apostolic Exhortation reinstates the critical moment we are in regarding the climate crisis and reinforces the importance of our Institute's Integral Ecology Policy and the many actions flowing from it.

At the end of September, at the UN General Assembly, the Secretary General spoke of "a world off its hinges". With the great fractures of climate crisis, of war leading from climate crisis and contributing to climate crisis of suffering and poverty, *Laudate Deum* comes at a moment of unique challenge for the whole of humanity.

Pope Francis calls out to every human being to unite and to serve our suffering creation, to heal the wounds of the world, and for a church that will bring about a transformation.

## Key messages of *Laudate Deum*

*Laudate Deum* is split into 6 chapters:

1. **The global climate crisis** – where Pope Francis outlines the learnings from the latest IPCC reports.
2. **The growing technological paradigm** – where we are reminded of the human causes of climate change and the issues around technology and economics.
3. **The weakness of international politics** – in which Pope Francis calls out the current multilateralism paradigm and calls for a politics based on subsidiarity.
4. **Climate conferences: progress and failures** – the history of the past Climate COPs is scrutinised for their inadequacy to create real change.
5. **What to expect from COP28 in Dubai?** – where Pope Francis calls for action to be drastic, intense and a commitment of all (LD 59). The focus that Pope Francis wants to see is on the necessary transition away from a fossil fueled world to the widespread use of clean and renewable energies.

**Spiritual motivations** – where we are reminded that as people of faith we can all play our part in caring for our common home.

This addendum to *Laudato Si'* draws our attention to the climate crisis, and the urgency for action at COP28. *Laudate Deum* cannot be read without first engaging with *Laudato Si'*.

## Some key quotes from *Laudate Deum*

"I have realised that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point." LD 2

"Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident." LD 5

"It is no longer possible to doubt the human – "anthropic" – origin of climate change." LD 11

"To say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change." LD 53

"I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognise that the most effective solutions will not come from the individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level." LD 69

"Efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste, and to consume with prudence, are creating a new culture." LD 71

## What is *Laudate Deum* calling us to do?

At COP 28, pope Francis calling forth all efforts towards policy that ceases the extraction of fossil fuels and other extractions while at the same time transitioning to an economy that serves the restoration of life. This endeavour requires courage to break through the economic interests of the extractors.

As individuals, in the lead up to the meeting, we can put pressure on our politicians to support this direction.

We are also reminded that 'every little bit helps' (LD 70), so that in our own lifestyle changes we are creating a culture of transformation.

Click here to read *Laudate Deum* in full [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html)

Click here to read the Institute's *Integral Ecology Policy* chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://institute.mercy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ISMAPNG\_Integral-Ecology-Policy-2021\_final.pdf

**Sally Neaves,**

Integral Ecology Animator, Mission Ministry Resource Coordinator, ISMAPNG

Image: <http://revista.olutador.org.br/noticia/laudate-deum>

