

After Easter – a fledgling faith community

We are well into the Easter season.

Easter and Christmas, two of the most important feasts in the liturgical calendar, are both followed by some weeks where we continue the celebration. What are we meant to be doing during these weeks of the Easter season? The easiest answer is 'contemplation and prayer'. The scripture readings we listen to during these weeks describe the experience of the believers who comprised the fledgling Church, and they provide rich input for our contemplation.

As you prepare to spend time with this resource, take a few minutes to still yourself. Set aside the concerns of the day, knowing you can return to them later after spending time praying and enjoying being as present to God as you can, and asking God to be present to you...



*God of the Journey,
May this Easter season
challenge us to a change of heart:
to live gently, to love generously,
to count blessings and to walk
paths of peace and inclusion.*

Amen.

*Mercy Partners, Easter Moments,
Holy Week and Easter*

Christianity places Jesus front and centre, the Son of God who became one of us, died and rose. Catherine McAuley was firm in her focus on Jesus as her source of nourishment and inspiration.

Unless we live in Jesus Christ by holy recollection, we can never draw souls to His love and service.

*Catherine McAuley,
Familiar Instructions, p. 103*

It is not sufficient that Jesus Christ be formed in us – he must be recognized in our conduct.

*Catherine McAuley,
Retreat Instructions, p. 72*

Ponder the two writings of Catherine's above. The first is primarily spiritual – reminding us of the importance of 'holy recollection'. The second is about our behaviour – the outcome of basing our lives on faith in Jesus becomes evident in our behaviour towards others – a reminder that the God of Christianity is a God of mercy and love.

In your life, are you able to find ways to regularly engage in 'holy recollection' – times when you can be alone in a quiet place? How does the mercy Jesus showed to so many inspire you to endeavour to be merciful to others in your day-to-day life?



**Blessed are the
merciful, for they
shall receive mercy...**

(Matt. 5: 7)

Catherine's task was to establish a new congregation of sisters – the Sisters of Mercy. Just as the early Christians needed to learn how to be a community of faith, so Catherine and those who joined her had to learn to live together in a community as women of faith, whose life vows were to express God's mercy in the ministries they undertook.

Mercy Associates groups have a similar task – to form communities of faith in their groups as they strive to live out God's mercy daily in their lives. In any community, whether it's our local Mercy Associates group, our parish, our workplace or our family, the way we conduct relationships is the test and proof of our commitment to mercy...

Faith communities nourish their members. They share in life-giving relationships and encourage each other on the journey. For your Mercy Associates group and other faith communities you are involved with, how are things going? **Ponder the quality of relationships you have with others in your group.** Which relationships are life-giving? Are there any that need a bit more attention and effort to keep them strong? Imagine how Catherine would have dealt with the inevitable struggles that can come with relationships, along with how she would have treasured the deep friendships she made with other Sisters and supporters of her work.

When we take mercy with us into relationships, it becomes like our 'calling card'. Of interest, some years ago Pope Francis wrote of **Mercy as God's identity card.** In *The Name of God is Mercy* – Pope Francis was asked *What is mercy for you?* His reply is in the box at right:

Etymologically, 'mercy' derives from *miser cordis*, which means opening one's heart to wretchedness. And immediately we go to the Lord: mercy is the divine which embraces attitude, it is God's giving himself to us, accepting us, and bowing to forgive. Jesus said he came not for those who were good but for the sinners. He did not come for the healthy, who do not need the doctor, but for the sick. For this reason, we can say that **mercy is God's identity card.** God of Mercy, merciful God. For me, this really is the Lord's identity.

As you conclude your time of prayer and reflection, ponder this poem by **Mary Wickham**, a Sister of Mercy whose poetry is profoundly beautiful, capturing the essence of mercy...

Mercy monosyllables

Mary Wickham rsm

Mercy works
with monosyllables mostly –
a yes, a no, a you and we.
Not terse but tender
is her plain-spoken brevity.
She listens, she tends,
a Martha-like Mary:
a touch, a wordless sigh,
the cup, the quiet care.
When sermons and lectures and advice and chat
fall flat,
when answers and solutions and neat endings flee,
in the company of grief and shock and bone weary sadness,
the monosyllables of Mercy are home.

