



INSTITUTE OF
SISTERS of MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Orientation to Mercy (self-paced) Workbook



The Scriptural quotations used in this booklet are from the New Revised Standard Edition.

This formation resource was first developed for the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea in February 2021 for use by staff new to the Institute and its ministries. On December 3, 2021, *Mercy Ministry Companions*, a ministerial public juridic person, was established, so this updated resource will also be of benefit to those new to *Mercy Ministry Companions* and its ministries.

January 2025.

ABOUT ORIENTATION TO MERCY

The *Orientation to Mercy* program was originally designed for staff new to the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) and its incorporated ministries, a number of whom transferred to *Mercy Ministry Companions* (MMC) on December 3, 2021. The program is, however, also suitable for those for whom the mercy charism is a core component in their roles, including those from non-ISMAPNG or MMC ministries and schools with a Mercy heritage.

The *Orientation to Mercy* (self-paced) is an 8-module program, with each module designed to take 30-40 minutes. The program was adapted from the one-day *Orientation to Mercy* seminars that were held face-to-face in early 2020. Whilst in-person seminars always bring an added dimension to education and formation, i.e., the ability to interact, network and share stories with the presenter and other participants, bringing people together physically is not always possible or feasible.

The eight topics covered in the Modules are:

- the story of Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, and the sources of inspiration for the work she did
- the early expansion of the Sisters of Mercy
- the *Works of Mercy*, their scriptural basis, and the traditional and contemporary manifestations of these.
- *Care for Our Common Home* (the 8th Work of Mercy) and the interconnectedness of the *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*
- The brief history of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea and the formation of ISMAPNG
- ISMAPNG's ministries
- Mercy Ministry Companions and its ministries
- The wider Mercy family & Mercy Values

Education and formation are not just about receiving input or even mentally processing what has been heard or read. It also involves some critical reflection on the resource material, engaging with it from the head, heart and spirit, being open to new insights. Ideally, formation also moves us into action. As such, each of the modules includes input, short activities and reflective questions.

At the start of each 30-40 minute module, there is a short video clip which provides information about the module. Within the body of the module, there are links to video clips and websites which relate to the focus of the module. There are also suggested short activities and reflective questions for consideration.

At the end of each module is a prayerful reflection. Central to being Catholic are the questions about the ways God is revealed through what we are seeing and hearing, how what we see and hear can strengthen our relationship with God, and the ways we are invited to respond. If you are not Catholic or are unfamiliar with the Christian tradition of prayer and reflection, you are invited to take this time to think about the points in the module which have made an impact on you.

You will need online access whilst participating in this program as there are several links to video clips and websites to which you will be directed as key resource material.

It may also be useful to print out a copy of this document so that you are able to write down your responses to the reflective questions whilst engaging with the content. It is also hoped that the links contained will be useful as resources for further exploration.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country in Melbourne, the *Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation* and in the inner west of Sydney, the *Gadigal and Wangai peoples of the Eora Nation*, (where the presenters taped the introductory video clips at the start of each module) and throughout Australia.

We acknowledge First Nations people throughout the world. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

MODULE 6

ISMAPNG Ministries

Watch the Introduction to Module 6 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 6

In this module, we explore the various ministries in which ISMAPNG and the wider Mercy family are involved, focusing on the call to the common mission of mercy which brings us all together. The Sisters of Mercy commenced many ministries within Australia and Papua New Guinea over the years. Some have discontinued or been handed over to other organizations to administer, while new ones have been established to meet new needs. Some sisters work in other Church or community agencies or volunteer their time and talents to assist people in need in their local areas.

Opening Reflection

Blessed be the house
that offers the traveller a place of rest.
Blessed be the table
that sets a banquet for the stranger to share.
Blessed be the heart that opens to welcome
the one who cannot repay.
Blessed be he who receives
and she who gives
Blessed be the be-longing we can sense
when the heart is still.
Blessed be the space created by kindness
in which we step into our potential.
Blessed be mercy in all of its facets
for it invites us to unwrap its gifts
and sing with all of creation
a song of joy
Amen

Anne McMillan rsm

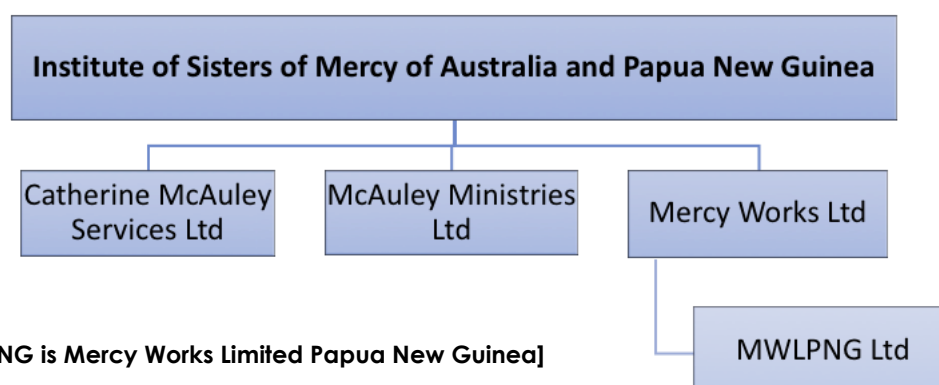
Madeline Duckett rsm, *Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table*, p. 95

MODULE 6

ISMAPNG Ministries

During 2019 - 2021, ISMAPNG explored ways of ensuring the governance of its incorporated ministries could be sustained into the future. Following a detailed research and consultation process, the Institute Leadership Team decided to establish *Mercy Ministry Companions* (MMC) to assume the canonical (Church-related) and civil responsibility for its Community Services, Education and Health and Aged Care ministries. The transfer of these ministries took place on December 3, 2021. There is a focus on MMC in Module 7.

Two schools in Ballarat, Damascus College and St Francis Xavier Primary School, transferred to the governance of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL) in 2021. Three ministries remain under the governance of ISMAPNG, as the diagrams below illustrate.



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ISMAPNG Ministries

Ministry areas in which ISMAPNG is involved



Sisters of Mercy around the world, along with their partners, associates and volunteers, are engaged in a wide range of ministries. The broad groupings of ministries in which Sisters, staff and volunteers of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) are involved are described in the ISMAPNG Ministries booklet, the link to which is below.

[Note: The information in the booklet is still current, even though it was produced before the establishment of *Mercy Ministry Companions*.]

<https://institute.mercy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ISMAPNG-Ministries-Updated-2021-002.pdf>

You might also like to watch some of the following video clips in which Sisters, staff and volunteers speak about their involvement in various ministries.

- House of Prayer and Spirituality (Townsville): <https://vimeo.com/287175362>
- Archives (Leichardt): <https://vimeo.com/227223893>
- Mercy Hub (Melbourne) <https://vimeo.com/372596227>
- Mercy Place (Ballarat): <https://vimeo.com/291838983> (interviews: start 2 min 44 sec)

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ISMAPNG Ministries

You may be interested in becoming involved in the following:

- Becoming a Mercy Associate
<https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-mercy-associate/>
- Joining Young Mercy Links
<https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-young-mercy/>
- Becoming a Mercy Connect volunteer with Mercy Works
<https://www.mercyworks.org.au/mercy-connect/>

Ministries for which ISMAPNG has governance responsibility

The links below direct you to information about the three ministries:

Catherine McAuley Services

<https://institute.mercy.org.au/mercy-in-action/catherine-mcauley-services-limited/>

McAuley Ministries

<https://institute.mercy.org.au/mercy-in-action/mcauley-ministries/>

Mercy Works (co-sponsored with the Sisters of Mercy Brisbane, North Sydney and Parramatta Congregations)

<https://www.mercyworks.org.au/who-we-are/>

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ISMAPNG Ministries

Nurturing a culture of Mercy in our ministries

It takes more than the name 'Mercy' to make a place of ministry an authentic Mercy ministry. The culture of an organization (summarized as 'the way we do things around here') can be evident the minute we walk in the front door or make our first contact by phone. A strong and vibrant culture, reflected in a just, merciful and compassionate stance towards all people and creation takes time to grow and develop. When communication is open and feedback is encouraged, new and creative ways of responding to need can emerge. Everyone has a part to play in nurturing this culture of mercy, including those new to the ministry or those taking on a new role within the ministry. Orientation to Mercy and commitment to ongoing mercy ministry formation are important.

As you walk around the built environment of your ministry, which 'Mercy signs and symbols' are evident?

Would visitors recognize your Mercy facility as having a strong and vibrant Mercy culture? Why or why not?

What ongoing formation in mercy would help you to undertake your role effectively?

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ISMAPNG Ministries

Prayerful Reflection

From time to time, individually and together, we are invited to reflect on what it means to be women and men of mercy in our time, within our particular mercy ministry, in and through our particular role in that ministry.

No matter where we are located, we are part of the wider Mercy ministry family.

Wherever there are people of good will whose hearts are touched by the plight of their neighbours, mercy can be given and received. We each have a 'merciful contribution' to make, using our time, our talents and the resources at our disposal.

The reality is however, that we each face personal and organizational challenges as we strive to balance our ideals with our personal circumstances. It is not always easy to bring to life our vision for what might be possible. But we continue the journey, sometimes on a path we may not have chosen or thought possible. Through all this, we strive to find our place in the wider scheme of things.

In her poem '**Wild Geese**', Mary Oliver captures this beautifully when she says:

"Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
Over and over announcing your place
In the family of things."

[Oliver, M. (1986) p. 14]

What 'image of mercy' is nourishing you or calling to you at this stage in your mercy jour

References & Acknowledgments

References

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