



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 7

Mercy Ministry Companions

There is no Module 7 video clip.

Introduction to Module 7

In the previous Module, we explored the various ministries in which ISMAPNG and the wider Mercy family are involved. The sisters have always responded to changing circumstances and embraced new opportunities for ministry and ministry governance. They have had a long history of working alongside lay women and men in the schools, hospitals and community services for which they were responsible and on ministry Boards.

In more recent times, the sisters wanted to ensure that the ministries they had nurtured for so many years would flourish into the future. The dream which was to become MMC eventually came to fruition. The most recent development in the governance of ISMAPNG's ministries was the establishment, on December 3, 2021, of *Mercy Ministry Companions* (MMC) as a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) in the Australian Church.

MMC now has governance responsibility for the Community Services, Education and Health and Aged Care ministries previously governed by ISMAPNG. This Module provides an overview of MMC, focusing on its ministries and its significance as a Catholic Church Authority in a time when the call to express synodality in the way we operate is growing.

Opening Reflection

We need a movement of people who know we need each other, who have a sense of responsibility to others and to the world. We need to proclaim that being kind, having faith and working for the common good are great life goals that need courage and vigour ...

I am thinking of great rives that gently swell, so gradually that you hardly notice them, but then the moment comes, and they burst their banks and pour forth. God's mercy breaks out at such 'overflow moments': bursting out, breaking the traditional confines that have kept so many people from what they deserve, shaking up our roles and our thinking...

We have to see clearly, choose well and act right. Let's talk about how. Let's allow God's word to Isaiah to speak to us: *Come, let us talk this over. Let us dare to dream.*"

Pope Francis (2020) *Let us dream: the path to a better future*, pp. 6-7

MODULE 7

Mercy Ministry Companions

Mercy Ministry Companions - a Ministerial Public Juridic Person

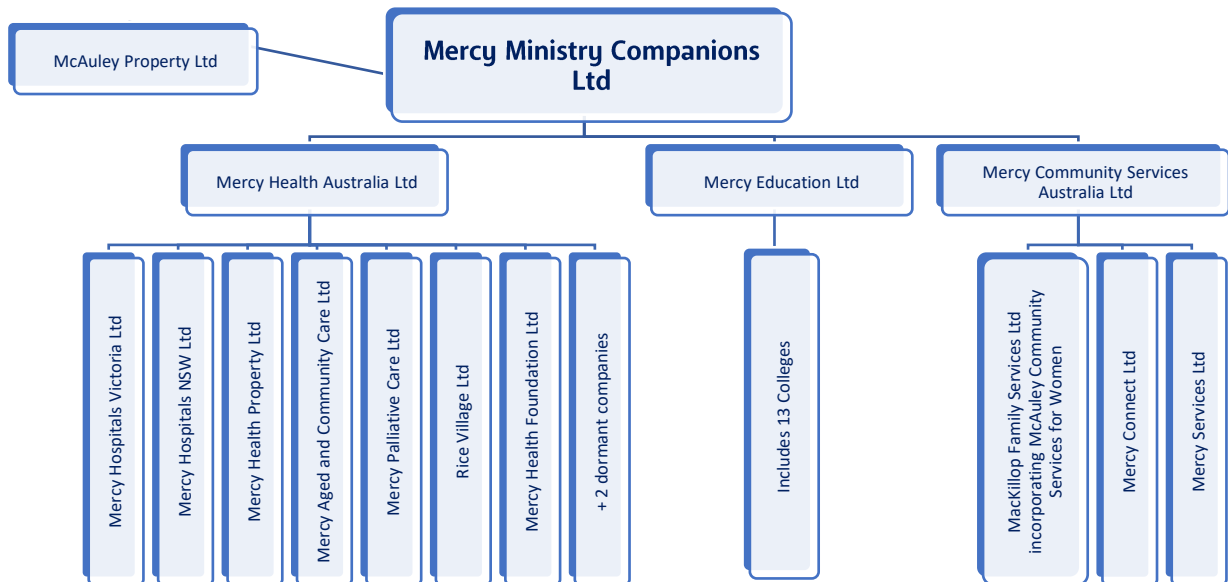
MMC is a ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP), working with the Bishops, Religious Congregations and another 12 MPJPs to further the mission of the Catholic Church in Australia. To find out more about MPJPs in Australia, explore the link below. The first resource listed provides a brief animated history (3 mins 4 sec) of the development of MPJPs in Australia. [Resources - Association of Ministerial PJP's](#)

The MMC **Welcome Pack** provides a concise introduction to MMC and can be accessed here <https://www.mercyministrycompanions.org.au/formation/formation-resources/welcome-pack-and-resources/>.

More detailed information about MMC can be found on its website at the link below www.mercyministrycompanions.org.au

Ministries for which MMC has governance responsibility

Each ministry is governed by a Board of Directors who are responsible to the Trustee Directors of MMC.



Notes regarding Mercy Community Services Australia Limited (MCSAL):

In October 2023, McAuley Community Services for Women became part of MacKillop Family Services. In October 2024, the decision was made to close the Aged Care facility at Singleton, NSW, in early 2025 and to transition the other services provided by Mercy Services in the Hunter Region of NSW to agencies with similar values. This Module will be updated as further developments take place.

MODULE 7

Mercy Ministry Companions

There are 13 schools within Mercy Education Ltd:

Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy, VIC;
Catherine McAuley College, Bendigo; VIC;
Emmanuel College, Warrnambool, VIC;
Mercedes College, Perth, WA;
Mt Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale, VIC;
Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg, VIC;
St Aloysius College, Adelaide, SA;
St Aloysius College, North Melbourne, VIC;
St Brigid's College, Lesmurdie, WA;
Sacred Heart College, Geelong, VIC;
Sacred Heart College, Kyneton, VIC;
Santa Maria College, Attadale, WA;
St Joseph's College Mildura, VIC.

There are a number of other schools and Colleges across Australia which have a strong 'Mercy tradition' even though ISMAPNG or MMC are not responsible for their governance. You may belong to one of these educational communities.

MMC seeks to respond to the call of Pope Francis for the Church to be synodal

In the ways it operates and makes decisions, MMC is seeking to be synodal. Recently, much has been written about the meaning of synodality and what a synodal Church might look like. Published in October 2024, the extracts below come from the English translation of the final document arising from the Church Synod on Synodality in Rome:

"... what unites them (*i.e. terms for the word 'synod' over the years*) is gathering together to dialogue, discern and decide. Owing to the experience of recent years, the meaning of these terms has come to be better understood, and what they represent is more vibrantly lived. They have become ever more deeply associated with the desire for a Church that is closer to people and more relational – a Church that is God's home and family... Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment." (p. 13 of the English translation, which can be accessed via the link below)

https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf

MODULE 7

Mercy Ministry Companions

Characteristics of synodality in our ministry activity

Synodality is characterized by three interrelated dimensions – Communion, Participation and Mission. Each dimension enriches the other two. The brief descriptors of each thread could provide some helpful starting points as you reflect on the degree to which your own organization is embracing synodality.

Communion: We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for God's people.

Participation: In a synodal church, all are qualified and called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions.

Mission: The synodal process has a deep missionary dimension, to witness better to the Gospel, especially walking with those who live on spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries. (Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality, Section 1.4)

<https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html>

✚ In what ways do you recognize these dimensions of synodality as being 'alive and well' and underpinning the culture of your organization?

✚ What are some of the challenges these dimensions of synodality can present?

MODULE 7

Mercy Ministry Companions

Prayerful Reflection



Mercy Ministry Companions

*continues the Mercy tradition, providing
Community Service, Education, Health and Aged
Care ministries enlivened by the spirit of
Catherine McAuley.*

Vision Statement

As companions in ministry, we seek to bring about a compassionate and just society and Church by striving to alleviate disadvantage, exclusion and inequality.

Mission Statement

We collaborate in the mission of Jesus by fostering a heart for Mercy within our ministries, in the broader society and for our environment.

✚ Which words or phrases from the MMC Vision and Mission Statements stay with you as you reflect on them?

✚ In what ways, if any, might you take inspiration from them as you endeavour to carry out your role in a spirit of synodality?

References & Acknowledgments

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