



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 1

The Story of Catherine McAuley

Watch the Introduction to *Orientation to Mercy* and the Module 1 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 1

In this module, we explore the story of Catherine McAuley, her life and the events that led to her founding the Sisters of Mercy. We reflect on what inspired and motivated her to do the things that she did.

The poor were everywhere on the streets of Dublin in the 1820s and 1830s. Provision of adequate housing in Dublin was a huge issue, as urban geographer, Dr Jacinta Prunty chf briefly outlines in this clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oRxbTwMx4Q>). (3 mins)

The wealthy, including those who lived in Baggot Street, may not have wanted these unfortunate people in their vicinity. Catherine McAuley, however, saw their potential...

Opening Reflection

The Caterpillar

'Don't kill me!' Caterpillar said,
As Charles had raised his heel
Upon the humble worm to tread,
As though it could not feel.

'Don't kill me!' and I'll crawl away
To hide awhile, and try
To come and look, another day,
More pleasing to your eye.

'I know I'm now among the things
Uncomely to your sight;
But by and by on splendid wings
You'll see me high and light!

'And then, perhaps, you may be glad
To watch me on the flower;
And that you spared the worm you had
To-day within your power!'

...

Hannah Flagg Gould

<https://discoverpoetry.com/poems/poems-about-mercy/>

... and it probably wouldn't even have entered Catherine's mind to harm the caterpillar, given her views on the sacredness of all of God's creation...

MODULE 1

The Story of Catherine McAuley

The docudrama 'In God Alone'

To begin this Module, you are invited to view the docudrama on the life of Catherine McAuley at <https://www.mercyworld.org/film-in-god-alone/> (22 min 25 sec)

Jot down some of the things that were significant or inspirational for you in this short film.

Were there any aspects of Catherine's life story which surprised you? If so, why?

What 'picture' of Catherine as a person are you developing in your mind?

If you met Catherine today, what question would you ask her? How do you think she might respond?

MODULE 1

The Story of Catherine McAuley

Ways of praying and reflecting

As part of each Module you are invited to spend some time in prayer and reflection. There are many ways of praying, of taking time to be in touch with the deeper part of ourselves, pondering the gifts of life and love, marvelling at creation, seeking a life-giving spirituality, grappling with grief or loss or just being in God's presence. Prayer can take many forms, some of which include:

- ✚ Consciously being aware of the gifts of creation around you and giving thanks
- ✚ Creating your 'quiet space' and regularly going there to refresh your spirit, to meditate, to become 'grounded' again
- ✚ Talking to God about the things which are important to you
- ✚ Reading or praying aloud from a book of prayers, from the Word of God in the Scriptures or from a piece of reflective writing and pondering your response
- ✚ Writing or drawing in a journal to express your thoughts, feelings, dreams, regrets ...
- ✚ Focusing on an object such as a candle to signify you are in a sacred place
- ✚ Engaging in 'centering prayer' by becoming attentive to your breathing, then slowly repeating a significant phrase from Scripture
- ✚ Listening to reflective music as you work, drive, prepare a meal or go for a walk
- ✚ Joining others in a place of worship to pray, sing and celebrate together
- ✚ Being part of the prayer and reflection opportunities offered in your workplace
- ✚ Participating in a retreat day or joining a prayer group
- ✚ Finding your particular way of praying ...

You might like to begin gently with a body prayer, inspired by Julian of Norwich:

(<https://dioceseofnewark.org/content/await-allow-accept-attend-advent-body-prayer>)

Prayerful Reflection¹

Read the passage from Isaiah 45:1-5 below

... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you... Do not fear, for I am with you...

¹ Adapted from Marie Gaudry, *With Catherine, my Spirit Mother*, (Sydney: Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, 2007), p. 21

MODULE 1

The Story of Catherine McAuley

- ✚ Reflecting on the film, how was God showing Catherine that she was 'precious' in the eyes of God?

- ✚ How did Catherine allow God to use her significant relationships to shape her journey?

Imagine God were in front of you, talking to you...

... Do not fear, (say your name), for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, (say your name) you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... (say your name), you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you... (say your name), do not fear, for I am with you...

- ✚ How is God showing you that you are 'precious' in God's sight?

- ✚ What example of Catherine's might you be called to follow?

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

Watch the Introduction to Module 2 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 2

News of the work that Catherine McAuley and her Sisters of Mercy were doing spread rapidly. Consequently, Catherine received many calls for assistance. She responded to these calls in her typical generous nature. In this module, we briefly look at the foundations of Sisters of Mercy which occurred in Catherine's lifetime.

Catherine McAuley was a prolific writer, and we are blessed to have access to a wealth of her writings. In this module, we explore three letters she wrote to the early Sisters.

Opening Reflection

Meeting Mercy

May you meet mercy each day:
in the light of your own heart,
at the hands of your loved ones,
in the eyes of the stranger and the needy.
And if by chance you do not at first meet it,
then search your heart for it,
listen patiently for word of it,
and it will tap you on the shoulder,
a quiet surprise,
a small gesture,
the tender look,
given and received
in the encounters of your day.

Mary Wickham RSM,
Souvenirs of Spirit: Poems & Prayers, p. 37.

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

Outwards from Dublin

In the remaining 10 years of her life following the founding of the Sisters of Mercy and the first convent at Baggot Street, Catherine founded a further nine autonomous convents, two of them in England (E), and two branch houses of the Dublin community.

AUTONOMOUS CONVENTS

Tullamore	1836
Charleville	1836
Carlow	1837
Cork	1837
Limerick	1838
Bermondsey	1839 (E)
Galway	1840
Birr	1840
Birmingham	1841 (E)

BRANCH HOUSES

Kingstown	1835
Boosterstown	1838

Learn more about Catherine and her early foundations at

<https://www.mercyworld.org/catherine/chronology/>

The outreach of the Sisters of Mercy was not restricted to Ireland and England. Between 1846 and 1907, 52 autonomous foundations of Sisters of Mercy were established in Australia. We will briefly explore these in Module 5.

Sisters of Mercy are currently in 46 countries, working with an increasing number of ministry partners, associates, and volunteers. You can view the map of where the Sisters of Mercy are ministering at <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/mercy-family/>

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

“... each society of Religious receives a grace particularly adapted to the duties which they are called to perform. We ought then to have great confidence in God in the discharge of all these offices of mercy, spiritual and corporal – which constitute the business of our lives ...”

Mary Sullivan RSM

The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818 – 1841, p. 462

Catherine McAuley’s Letters

Catherine McAuley was a prolific writer and kept in touch with her ever-growing network of Sisters of Mercy through letters. We are very fortunate as a great number of these letters have survived, allowing us to learn much about Catherine and the early Sisters of Mercy. We are indebted to Mercy historian, Mary C. Sullivan RSM, for her research and scholarship in making these letters accessible to the Mercy family.

Catherine’s letter to Sr Elizabeth Moore, written on 13 January 1839, is significant because it contains Catherine’s reflections on the first eight years of the new Institute. Listen to the extract from this letter on Track 2 (5 min 20 sec) at the following link

<https://www.mercyworld.org/library/your-ever-affectionate-catherine-mcauley179/>

Jot down something from Catherine’s account of the founding years of the Sisters of Mercy which resonates with your experience of looking back on your life.

NOTE: The page numbers referred to on the web page above correspond to those in the book *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818-1841* by Mary C. Sullivan.

Find out if your ministry has a copy of Catherine’s letters for your future reference.

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

Read the excerpts from two of Catherine's letters on the next two pages of this booklet. Both letters are short, written in 1840 to women whom Catherine knew very well.

Frances Warde, who was the leader of the Mercy Community in Carlow at the time and was a close friend to Catherine, held many leadership roles during her life. **Mary Ann Doyle**, leader of the Mercy Community in Tullamore at the time, was one of the first Sisters of Mercy, having done her novitiate training with Catherine at Georges Hill.

The footnotes to each letter contain important information about the backdrop to each situation.

As you read the letters and the footnotes, reflect on the following questions and jot down some points as you go.

**What insights do the letters give you about:
the things which were important to Catherine?**

Catherine's approach to leadership?

Catherine's belief that, for the new Institute, mercy constituted "the business of our lives"?

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

163. To Sister M. Frances Warde
Carlow

Convent, Baggot Street
March 2, 1840

My Dear Sister M. Frances

I feel exceedingly anxious about you in your present state of trial and fear for the health of your community, but please God the contagion will not spread.⁴⁰ They have had three in fever in Tullamore-- Sister Purcell & two Lay Sisters, all recovering, thank God.⁴¹ I am sure no place or convent could be better situated for recovery than yours - it has everything desirable. Poor Sister M. Francis goes on in the same hopeless way.⁴² Most melancholy are those protracted maladies - six fevers would be preferable in my opinion. They have a similar case in Cork.⁴³

I did hope that God would have spared you all these severe trials for longer time - but His Holy will be done in all things. May He never leave the choice to us. We never can be unhappy while we love and serve Him faithfully. I trust you use every prudent precaution. I am sure you do for others, but remember, well regulated charity begins at home.

May God preserve and bless you. Let me hear often until you have a favorable change.

Your ever affectionate
Mary C. McAuley

Autograph: Silver Spring

40 Irish historians of medicine do not usually cite 1840 as a year in which typhus fever was particularly prevalent in Ireland, yet Catherine McAuley's letters in February and March 1840 report cases of "typhus" or "fever" in the Carlow, Tullamore, Charleville, and Limerick communities- with a total of six sisters affected. In Carlow, the postulant Julia Redmond was still seriously ill, though recovering. Crawford notes that in Ireland in the nineteenth century "four major epidemics [involving "typhus symptoms"] occurred in 1816-19, 1826-7, 1836-7 and 1846-9." Like other medical historians she points out that in the first half of the century "typhus was generally referred to in Ireland simply as 'fever' ... 'Fever', in fact, was an omnibus term that embraced several febrile conditions, such as relapsing fever and typhoid fever, as well as typhus it was not until William Jenner published his work in 1849 that typhus, typhoid and relapsing fever were accepted as distinct diseases" (121-22). Frederick Cartwright's *Disease and History* provides a helpful historical account of these diseases and of the evolution in recognizing their bacteriological causes. **41** In Tullamore, Mary Teresa Purcell, Mary Martha Gilligan, a novice, and Elizabeth Molloy, a postulant, all had "fever" which "still continued to rage in the town and of course the poor were the victims, As the sisters were unceasing in their visits to the poor sufferers, they naturally caught the infection." Eventually, Dr. Cantwell "formally forbade the sisters to attend infectious cases, and although often called upon to revoke the prohibition, he could not be prevailed on to do so" (Tullamore Annals 32). **42** Mary Francis (Margaret) Marmion was dying at Baggot Street of consumption. The sister of Mary Cecilia Marmion, she had professed her vows only fourteen months before. She will die on March 2, 1840 (see Letters 164 and 165). **43** Mary Francis (Catherine) Mahony was dying in Cork, evidently of consumption. She was one of the first postulants to enter the Cork community and had just professed her vows on February 11, 1840 (Cork Register)

Mary Sullivan (ed.) *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818 – 1841*
(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 255

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

190. To Sister Mary Ann Doyle
Tullamore

Convent, Baggot Street
August 20, 1840

My Dear Sister M. Ann

I had a letter this day from Limerick. Sr. E²⁸ says you are about to send two Srs. to learn the education system - indeed she speaks as if you were to be one. Surely not. I suppose you will never be one of the appointed teachers, though you might oversee: Would it not be better to try to get a well qualified Monitress from the Model School until your Sisters would know the method. They sent us such a one from Limerick, quite a poor girl. I should think they could send you one. She should be paid a small salary [*sic*] out of what the board allows. I do not think they permit any one to attend the Model School in Dublin except those who are settled with them for the purpose and remain all day - paying a certain fee.²⁹

There could not be a more delightful school than they have in Limerick--if one of your Sisters went there Sister Harnett, who is exceedingly clever, would teach her in a very short time - if a Priest could be met to accompany her. I need not add that you have this house at your command if you think of Dublin.

Sr. M. Cecilia hurries me lest Sr. M. Teresa should not have her note in time to answer.³⁰

I am much better - the cough almost gone. Write to me soon - and tell me how all goes on. Sr. M. Cecilia was delighted to get a note from her old favorite. God bless you. Give my affectionate love to each and believe me always.

your attached
M. C. McAuley

Sister Angela has moved into her new Convent.³¹

Autograph: Bermondsey

28 Mary Elizabeth Moore, superior in Limerick. **29** As part of the construction of the new convent in Tullamore, new schoolrooms were provided. Evidently Mary Ann Doyle, the superior in Tullamore, now planned to have the school affiliated with the national school system, once the teachers were prepared to meet its standards. The mode of instruction Catherine McAuley recommends is the Lancastrian method wherein a team of monitresses is employed to hear the students' lessons after they have received instruction from a head teacher or have studied the material on their own. Catherine advocates drawing on the expertise of Mary Vincent Harnett in Limerick, urging Mary Ann Doyle not to burden herself with a teaching role in addition to her other duties as superior. Model Schools were established in some of the major cities of Ireland to prepare teachers and monitresses for the national system, the one in Dublin apparently requiring a prior commitment to the Dublin schools. In the next paragraph Catherine seems to suggest that a sister could also study in the school at Baggot Street for service in Tullamore. **30** Mary Cecilia Marmion, and Mary Teresa Purcell in Tullamore. **31** Mary Angela Dunne in Charleville.

Mary Sullivan (ed.) *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818 – 1841*
(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 295

MODULE 2

Early Expansion

Prayerful Reflection

Suscipe is the Latin word for 'receive'. It became almost synonymous with a prayer of self-sacrifice to God following St Ignatius of Loyola's prayer of the same title. The *Suscipe of Catherine McAuley* is, as the name suggests, the one that she wrote and prayed. Whilst it uses some language which we may not use today, it continues to be prayed and sung by Sisters of Mercy, their associates, staff, students and volunteers everywhere.

Suscipe of Catherine McAuley

My God, I am yours for all eternity.
Teach me to cast my whole self
into the arms of your Providence
with the most lively,
unlimited confidence
in your compassionate, tender pity.
Grant, O most merciful Redeemer,
that whatever you ordain or permit
may always be acceptable to me.
Take from my heart all painful anxiety;
suffer nothing to afflict me but sin,
nothing to delight me,
but the hope of
coming to the possession of
You my God,
in your own everlasting kingdom.
Amen.

Listen to and pray Catherine's *Suscipe* with the staff and students at the Santa Barbara Catholic School in Guam at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35tXvZ1BFo0>.

- ✚ Do you have a prayer, poem, piece of music or art or a special place to go which nourishes you in times of need or which helps you to be your best self?
- ✚ Think of ways you can be merciful to yourself.
- ✚ What small response to need could you make as you start or continue your mercy journey?

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Watch the Introduction to Module 3 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 3

In this module, we explore the traditional corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy, their scriptural foundations and their conventional and contemporary manifestations. We reflect on how the Works of Mercy were central to Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, and how we are called to engage in them as women and men of mercy today.

Opening Reflection – Catherine’s words

Sweet Mercy! – soothing, patient and kind –
softens the highs and rears the fallen mind;
Knows with just reign and even hand to guide
between the false fear and arbitrary pride.
Not easily provoked, she soon forgives:
feels love for all, and by a look, relieves.
Soft peace she brings, whenever she arrives,
removes our anguish and reforms our lives;
makes the rough paths of peevish nature even,
and opens in each heart a little heaven.

Helen Marie Burns and Sheila Carney, (citing Angela Bolster, 1985, p. 817) *Praying with Catherine McAuley*, p. 36.

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Works of Mercy are actions we can take in response to need, giving and receiving the mercy of God. They have been traditionally divided into two categories, the Corporal and the Spiritual. The Corporal Works of Mercy address material and physical needs, whilst the Spiritual Works of Mercy address emotional and spiritual needs. Traditionally, there are 7 Corporal and 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy, all of which have their basis in Scripture.

Pope Francis, in 2016, included 'Care for Our Common Home' as an 8th Spiritual and Corporal Work of Mercy. Given the importance of these works in our world today and the integral way that they are connected to the other Works of Mercy, Module 4 is dedicated to the 8th Work.

Scriptural Foundations for the Works of Mercy

Reference to 6 of the 7 traditional corporal works of Mercy can be found in the Gospel of Matthew Ch. 25, v 35. There are however, several other passages in Scripture which refer to these actions.

Corporal Works

Feed the Hungry	Matthew 14:15-21; 25:35 Tobit 1:17 Proverbs 22:9 Isaiah 58:10 2 Kings 4:42-44; 25:35 Luke 3:11; 9:12-17 John 6:35
Give Drink to the Thirsty	Matthew 25:35 Tobit 1:17 Isaiah 55:1 John 6:35; 7:37-39 Revelation 21:6; 22:17
Clothe the Naked	Matthew 25:36
Shelter the Homeless	Matthew 25:35
Visit the Sick	Matthew 25:36
Visit the Imprisoned	Matthew 25:36
Bury the Dead	Tobit 1:18; 12:12

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Spiritual Works

Counsel the Doubtful	Matthew 13:18-23 Mark 4:13-20; 9:14-29 Luke 8:11-15 John 14:27
Instruct the Ignorant	Daniel 12:3 Matthew 16:15; 28:19-20 Mark 16:14-18 Luke 24:47-49 John 20:21 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-5
Admonish the Sinner	Timothy 4:2 Proverbs 27:17 Luke 15:7; 17:3 2
Comfort the Afflicted	James 1:27 Psalms 9:8-11; 22:23-27; 27:4-5; 30:2-4; 46:2; 55:22; 56; 71:20-22; 116; 119:49-50 Jeremiah 29:11-14 Lamentations 3:21-24, 31-33 Nahum 1:7-8 Matthew 11:28-30 John 14:15-18, 27; 16:22-23 2 Corinthians 5:17 1 Peter 5:5-11 Revelation 21:4
Bear Wrongs Patiently	Matthew 5:10; 5:38-48 Luke 6:27-36 1 Peter 2:18-19
Forgive Offenses Willingly	Mark 11:25 Matthew 6:12,14-15; 18:15-35 Luke 11:1-4; 17:1-4
Pray for the Living	2 Maccabees 12:45; 38-46
Pray for the Dead	James 5:16

 Select a Corporal and Spiritual Work of Mercy and reflect on the related scripture passages.

NOTE: If you do not have access to a bible you can find the passages online if you type them into a search engine.

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Activity:

Following are some quotes from Catherine McAuley's writings. Can you link each quote to a work of Mercy?

QUOTES FROM CATHERINE

“A good beginning is of great importance, you must waste some time with visitors.”

“It is better to relieve 100 imposters – if there be any such – than to suffer one really distressed person to be sent away empty.”

“God knows that I would rather be cold and hungry than the poor in Kingstown or elsewhere should be deprived of any consolation in our power to afford”

“Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to where possible.”

“Now and again bestow some praise.”

“We should be shining lamps giving light to all around us.”

“Try to meet all with peace and ease.”

“There are things the poor prize more highly than gold, tho’ they cost the donor nothing;
among these are the kind word, the gentle compassionate look, and the patient hearing of their sorrows.”

“There is nothing of greater importance than the perfect discharge of our ordinary duties.”

The poor need help today, not next week!”

“It is for God that we serve the poor, and not for thanks”

“We can never say “it is enough.”

“You must be cheerful and happy, animating all around you”

Works of Mercy: Literal and Symbolic or Figurative

As you reflect on the Works of Mercy, keep in mind that we can engage in them literally (e.g. giving water to someone who is thirsty) as well as symbolically or figuratively (e.g. responding to someone who is thirsting for knowledge or acceptance).

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Clare Agnew, a contemporary of Catherine McAuley, was a Sister of Mercy from 1838-1842. She is known for her illustrations of the early Sisters of Mercy as they engaged in the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy in Ireland in the 1830s.

See Clare Agnew's illustrations on the Mercy International Association website at <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/works-of-mercy/>

Activity:

Select an illustration that either resonates with you or is a core work in your Mercy ministry.

In what ways is this particular work of mercy evident in your ministry?

Recall an instance when you were the recipient of a work of mercy undertaken by another person. How does it feel to receive mercy from another?

Contemporary engagement in the Works of Mercy

Pope Francis, speaking in St Peter's Square in Rome to a Jubilee audience on 30 June, 2016, reminded those gathered there that "*the works of mercy are not theoretical ideas, but concrete testimonies. They oblige us to roll up our sleeves to alleviate suffering.*"

Annette Schneider rsm, reflecting on the legacy of Clare Agnew and the lens she gave us into the works of the early Sisters of Mercy through her illustrations, writes that

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

“the works of mercy are the building blocks on which a compassionate and merciful world continues to be shaped by followers of Jesus who have ‘rolled up their sleeves’, alongside people of all faith traditions and all people of good will, to advocate for mercy, justice, compassion and inclusiveness.” [Schneider, A. (2019) A Lens on the Works of Mercy: Clare Agnew and her Legacy, p. 62]

What are some of the contemporary issues in response to which we are called to ‘roll up our sleeves’ and engage in Works of Mercy?

Think about the scope of influence you have in your current ministry role. How might you nurture a culture of ‘cheerful response to need’ amongst those with whom you work?

MODULE 3

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Prayerful Reflection²


The parable of the Good Samaritan reveals Jesus' response to the question "Who is my neighbour?" posed to him by one of the scribes. Take some time to read the parable of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke 10:25-37.

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Notice that Jesus does not answer the scribe's question by defining "my neighbour", but turns the question around and instead, asks "who is the neighbour to the person in need?"

Stopping to help the man in need was not a simple action. Showing mercy entailed the "willingness to enter into the chaos of another" to make things right. Viewed through this lens, it is easy to see how mercy is at the heart of Catholic theological tradition. Jesus is God's way of entering into the chaos of human existence to rescue us from our slavery to false gods.

-  What are some of the 'false gods' from which God is calling us away in contemporary society?

² Adapted from James Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, 3rd Edition (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), pp. 4-7

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

Watch the Introduction to Module 4 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 4

In this module, we briefly explore the 8th Work of Mercy proposed by Pope Francis in 2016. We see how the Cry of the Earth invariably becomes intertwined with the Cry of the Poor.

Opening Reflection

Blessing

Blessed be mother earth
who nourishes and cares for her children.
Blessed be the fruits of earth
that I often take for granted.
Blessed be the eyes that see
what is truly happening around us.
Blessed be the heart of mercy
whose crack enables deeper seeing.
Blessed be the 'saving element'
hidden deep within despair
that can gently transform
all darkness into light

Madeline Duckett rsm,
Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table, p.72.

Catherine McAuley and the Earth

Whilst "ecology" would not be a term used during the time of Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), her understanding of the interconnectedness of all of God's creation, and our responsibilities as "strangers and pilgrims" traveling on this Earth, can be found in her writings and actions.

Mary Sullivan RSM explores some of these themes in *Catherine McAuley and Earth*, a reflection piece she wrote for the *Mercy International Reflection Process* in 2016. The reflection can be accessed via the link below.

https://www.mercyworld.org/f/45074/x/f64ce2790b/catherine-mcauley-and-eco-justice_a4.pdf

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

The 8th Work of Mercy: Care for our Common Home – 3 key dates

24 May 2015

Pope Francis promulgated his encyclical (a letter which deals with some aspect of Catholic teaching), *Laudato Si'* (Praise be to you): *On Care of Our Common Home*. Unlike other papal encyclicals which are normally addressed to a particular audience, e.g., bishops in a specific country, all clergy throughout the world, etc., Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si'* to "every person living on this planet".

The encyclical can be found at

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

8 December 2015 – 20 November 2016

On 13 March 2015, Pope Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which would run from 8 December that year till 20 November 2016.

I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (cf. Lk 6:36).

Pope Francis

A simple search of "jubilee year of mercy resources" on the internet will result in several excellent resources on the theme of "Mercy" created for this world-wide event.

1 September 2016

Pope Francis declared that in addition to the seven corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and eighth work, 'care for our common home' would be included both as a spiritual work, and as a corporal work.

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a 'grateful contemplation of God's world' which 'allows us to discover in each thing, a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.'

As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires 'simple daily gestures, which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness' and 'makes itself felt in every action that seeks a better world.'

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor

One of the key messages in *Laudato Si'* is that the degradation of the earth invariably affects the poor. When the earth suffers, it is the poor and marginalised who suffer first and the most. Recognition of this correlation between the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor is neither new nor championed only by Pope Francis.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 9 out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air, and more than 7 million people die from air pollution related causes every year. More than 90% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, followed by low- and middle-income countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region, Europe and the Americas.³

According to water.org, a global non-profit organization working to bring water and sanitation to the world, 1 in 9 people around the world lack access to clean, reliable drinking water. The vast majority live in extreme poverty and children are often the hardest hit. Their growth is stunted because poor water quality inhibits their ability to absorb nutrients. Women are also disproportionately affected by lack of clean drinking water, because they are often forced to spend hours fetching water every day when communities lack safe taps.⁴

In wealthier countries, we don't usually eat spoilt or contaminated food and often throw out food even when it is edible. Legislation ensures that contaminated and spoilt food is recalled, preventing the contraction and spread of disease. According to WHO, contaminated food still affects 600 million people each year, killing 420,000 people. The vast majority of deaths from food poisoning occur in poorer nations, with children under the age of 5 accounting for 40% of all deaths. Apart from not being able to afford better food in the first place, the lack of regulation on food safety, industrial contaminants in the water used for crop irrigation, tropical weather allowing pests to flourish, food being improperly transported and handled, chemicals leaching into food supplies, and other reasons, poorer people are greatly disadvantaged.⁵

³ World Health Organisation, *Air Pollution* https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1, accessed 8 December 2020

⁴ Water.org, *Access to water turns poverty into possibility* <https://water.org/about-us/>, accessed 8 December 2020

⁵ Scientific American, *Contaminated Food Sickens 1 in 10 People Worldwide Each Year* <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/contaminated-food-sickens-1-in-10-people-worldwide-each-y>, accessed 8 December 2020

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

View the short video clip *Sisters on the Planet: Carteret Islands* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XDHMgqIcEU> (8 min 18 sec)

In what ways do you see the Cry of the Earth intertwined with the Cry of the Poor?

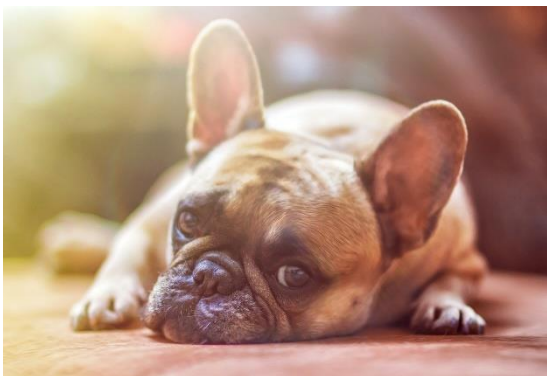
Gratefully Contemplating God's World

Reflect on the beauty of creation by contemplating the following images, other images that you might have or photographs of nature you have taken.



MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy



MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

View these 1-2 minute time-lapse videos from the World Economic Forum which focus on the human impact on the earth <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/5-videos-that-reveal-the-human-impact-on-earth/>

What response do you have to these clips? What stays with you?

Simple Daily Gestures

View this short video clip on some of the *Simple Daily Gestures* in which Sisters and staff of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea are engaged.

<https://vimeo.com/388938580> (5 min 05 sec)

What are some simple gestures that you can start doing where you live?

Find out how you can support the things your Mercy organization is doing to care better for the earth and its people.

MODULE 4

The 8th Work of Mercy

Our ongoing climate crisis

Eight years on from the call echoing in *Laudate Si*, Pope Francis has written again to all people of good will in **Laudate Deum**, published in October 2023. In #69, he writes:

'I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values. At the same time, I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognise that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.'

Pope Francis gives us many points for ongoing reflection. The full text of **Laudate Deum** is available below:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html

Prayerful Reflection

The *examen* or examination of conscience is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to identify or detect God's presence and direction for us. It is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

Anyone who takes time at the conclusion of each day to reflect on what was good about the day and what could have been done better is engaged in a similar practice, without perhaps naming it in 'religious language'.

You are invited to participate in the following examen led by Fr. Tom Regan, S.J

Laudato Si' - Examination of Conscience (8 min 10 sec)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5-5UFd5OxQ>

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

Watch the Introduction to Module 5 video clip [here](#).

Introduction to Module 5

In this module, we briefly explore the formation of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG), tracing its history from the various original foundations located in Ireland, England and Argentina. We also look briefly at the ministries of the Sisters and those who work alongside them today.

Opening Reflection

Mercy

Mercy is a woman of indeterminate age
and unremarkable appearance.
She is not fussy about the company she keeps,
and tends to be full of excuses for her friends,
having seen life from their angle.

Her heart, like her pockets, is capacious.
She has a voice rich in tender understanding
But is at her best in silence
when she sits alongside
the grief-stricken and the guilty
and their sorrow seeps into her soul.

Curiously, she sees herself reflected
in the eyes of both murderer and victim,
so sits not in judgement but companionably.
She is a subtle teacher.

...

Mary Wickham RSM,
Extract from *Souvenirs of Spirit: Poems & Prayers*, p. 64

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

Foundations of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea

In the same way that Catherine McAuley sent some of Sisters to start new foundations in England and Ireland, these foundations, once established, sent Sisters to begin other new foundations. **Many of these requests for Sisters of Mercy came from bishops appointed to Australia but with strong links to Ireland.** Between 1846 and 1898, 18 different groups of Sisters arrived in Australia from Ireland, England and Argentina. **By 1907, there were 52 autonomous foundations of Sisters of Mercy in Australia.** (see diagram on p. 29)

Several of these autonomous groups were amalgamated between 1902 and 1942. (see diagram on p. 30).

One of the factors which gave impetus to the amalgamation of some of the independent Mercy convents was **the desire of the Australian government in the early 1900s to improve the quality of teacher training.** Consequently, the Australian Catholic bishops in 1905 decided that *"the solution was to consolidate resources and establish centralized novitiates for each religious congregation each with its own training college."* (Kerr, p. 21). In response to this reality, **many smaller Mercy houses joined with larger ones** so that by the early 1950s there were 17 Mercy congregations in Australia.

Reconfiguring continued in the Mercy world. In 1954, eight groups formed the Australian Union of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. The remaining nine groups formed the Australian Federation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy in 1955. Both groups made their first foundations in Papua New Guinea in 1956 and 1957 respectively. By 1981, the Union and Federation had ceased when the 17 Mercy congregations formed the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia (ISMA). In 2010 the Autonomous region of Papua New Guinea was formally established. **On December 12, 2011, 14 Mercy Congregations and the autonomous region of Papua New Guinea formed the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG).**

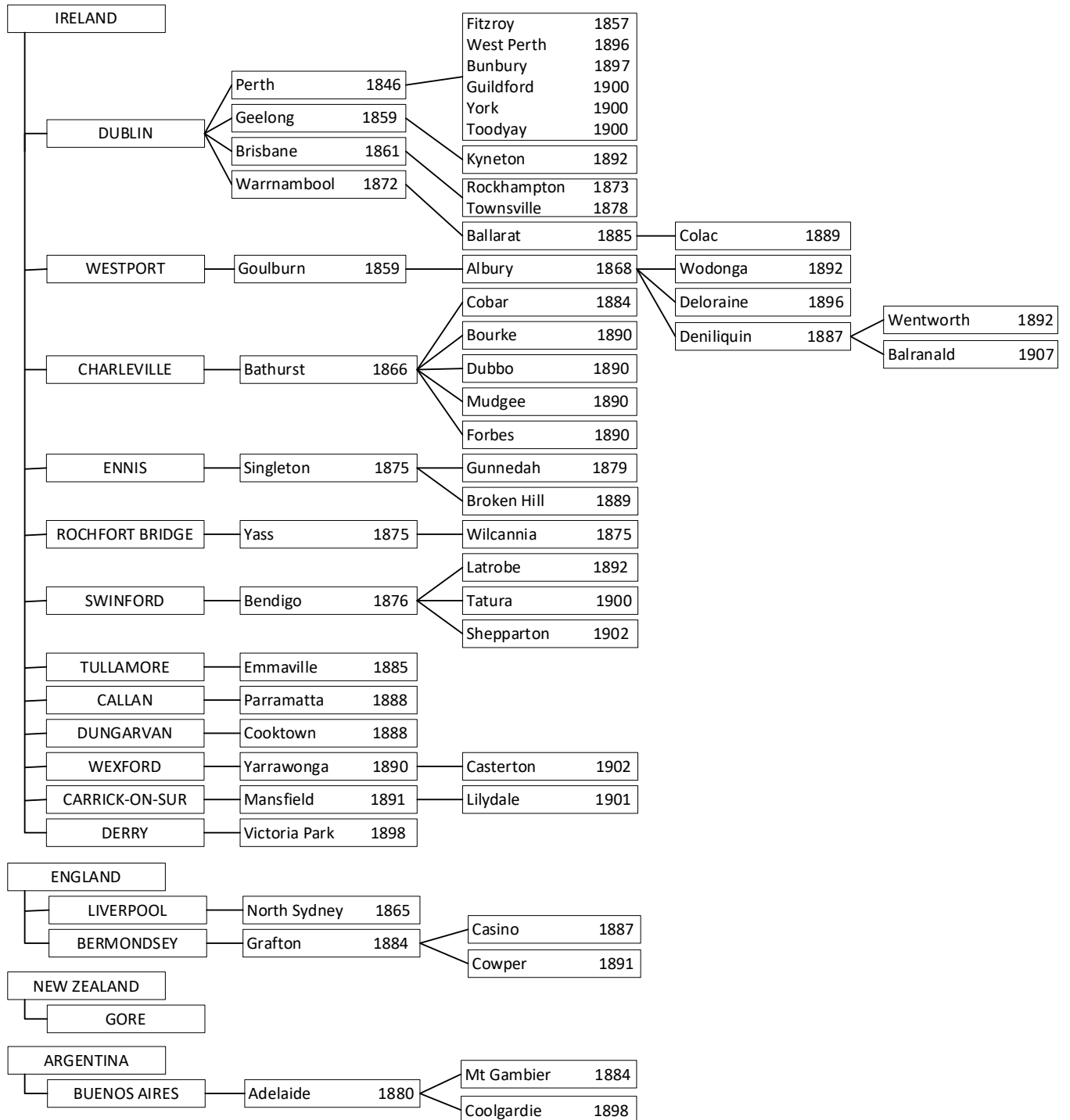
Alongside **ISMAPNG**, the Mercy congregations of **Brisbane, North Sydney and Parramatta** continue to respond to need in a variety of ways. These 4 Mercy groups share responsibility for a number of ministries, e.g. Mercy Works Ltd.

The diagrams which follow provide some details about **the significant dates and locations of the unfolding story** of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

AUTONOMOUS FOUNDATIONS OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY OF AUSTRALIA: 1846-1907

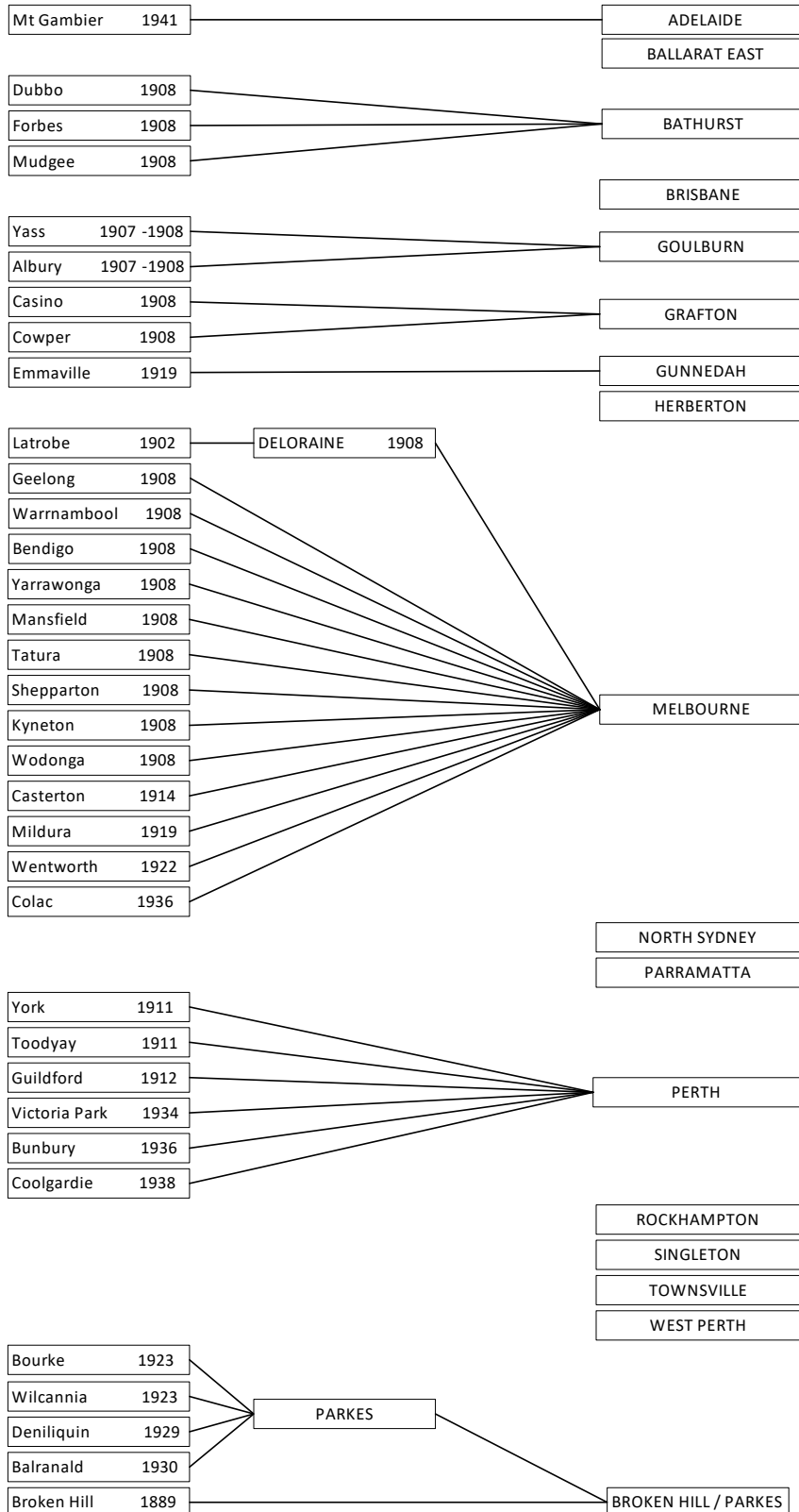


Berenice Kerr, *The Land that I Will Show You*, p.20

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

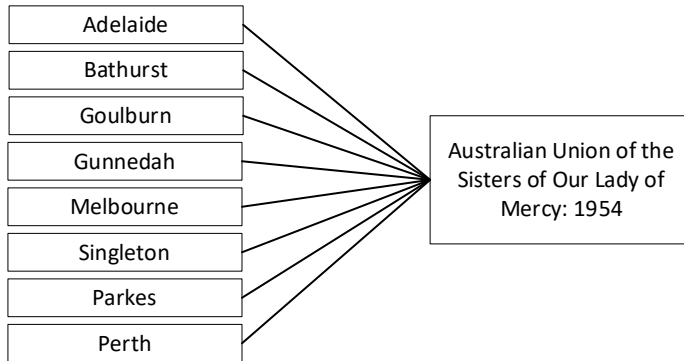
MERCY AMALGAMATIONS NSW (1907 – 1942), VIC/TAS (1902-1941) and in 1950



MODULE 5

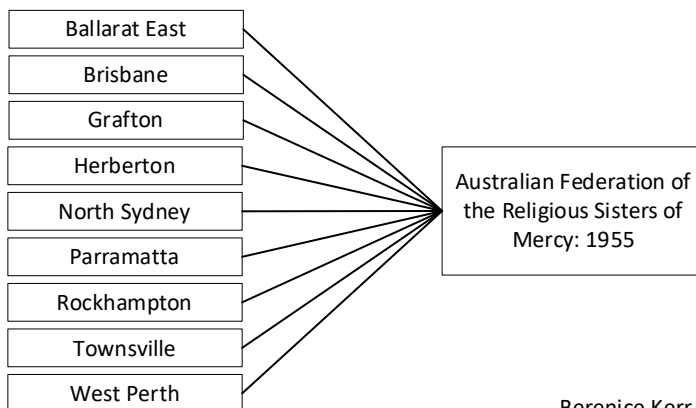
Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

THE AUSTRALIAN UNION OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF MERCY



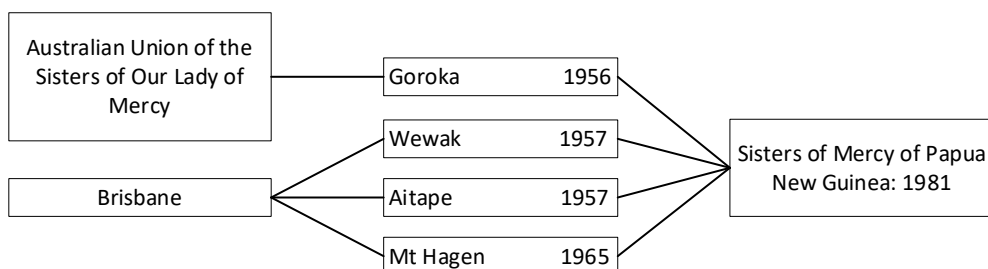
Berenice Kerr, *The Land that I Will Show You*, p.34

THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF MERCY



Berenice Kerr, *The Land that I Will Show You*, p.38

SISTERS OF MERCY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA



MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

ISMAPNG Today

View the short video clip on the formation of ISMAPNG <https://vimeo.com/285699965> (5 min 56 sec)

What do you know about the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy which established your Mercy ministry? Using the diagrams on the previous pages, trace this Congregation back to its foundation house in Ireland, England or Argentina.

Activity

- ✚ There may be Mercy sisters living in your local area, If so, try to make contact with them. As part of your Orientation, invite them to share their local founding story and their current involvement in the local community. Some of them may still be involved with your ministry.

Many stories can be shared over 'a comfortable cup of tea'! The sisters will also be interested to learn of the current developments in the Mercy ministry that you have recently joined.

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

ISMAPNG Constitutions and 2017 Chapter Statement

The Works of Mercy, central to Catherine and the first Sisters of Mercy, continue to be so for the Sisters, their associates, staff and volunteers today, as these core documents show.



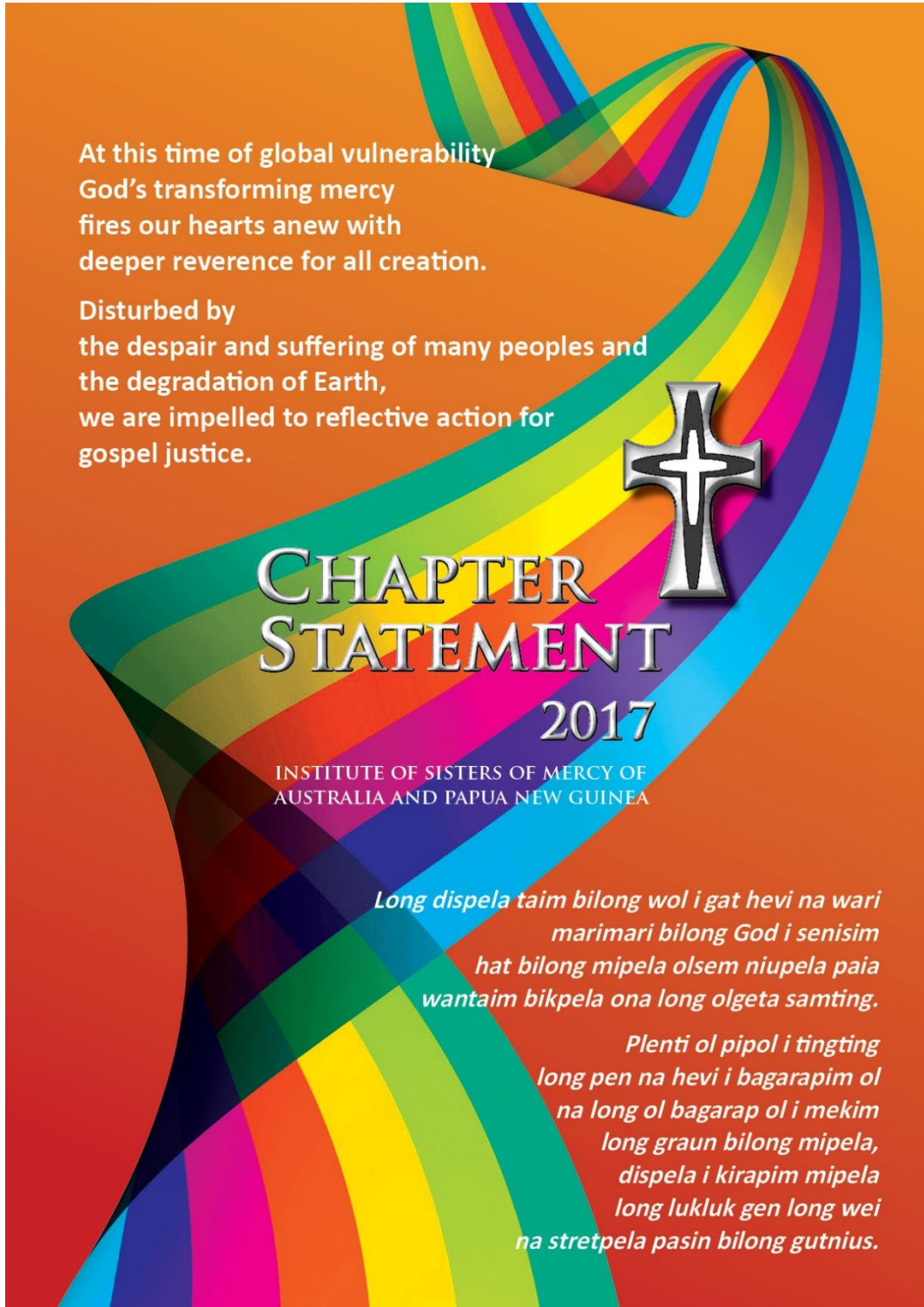
At its centre, the diagram above has the aim and purpose of ISMAPNG as stated in section J2.10 in the ISMAPNG Constitutions. Take some time to reflect on the diagram.

Which work(s) of mercy do you think are the most challenging for people involved in your Mercy ministry? Why might that be the case do you think?

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

ISMAPNG Chapter Statement



At this time of global vulnerability
God's transforming mercy
fires our hearts anew with
deeper reverence for all creation.

Disturbed by
the despair and suffering of many peoples and
the degradation of Earth,
we are impelled to reflective action for
gospel justice.

**CHAPTER
STATEMENT**

2017

INSTITUTE OF SISTERS OF MERCY OF
AUSTRALIA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Long dispela taim bilong wol i gat hevi na wari
marimari bilong God i senisim
hat bilong mipela olsem niupela paia
wantaim bikpela ona long olgeta samting.*

*Plenti ol pipol i tingting
long pen na hevi i bagarapim ol
na long ol bagarap ol i mekim
long graun bilong mipela,
dispela i kirapim mipela
long lukluk gen long wei
na stretpela pasin bilong gutnius.*

MODULE 5

Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

Which of the words or phrases in the ISMAPNG 2017 Chapter Statement are significant for you in your life and work?

Prayerful Reflection

Whilst Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy, neither she nor the Sisters of Mercy have a monopoly on mercy. At the heart of the mercy that Catherine and the Sisters of Mercy live and practise, is God's mercy.

The theme of mercy is expressed throughout the Christian Scriptures. In the gospels, Luke begins his story of Jesus, with the portrayal of Mary (Lk 1:50.54) who praises God for the mercy shown to Israel and to the whole of humanity in the Magnificat: "*His mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.*" (1:50) God intervenes in the world for the salvation of humankind through Jesus, who is seen as an agent of God's mercy. Jesus also reflects God's mercy as he reaches out to people with mercy and compassion.

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:20-49),

In his Gospel, Luke highlights 'mercy' as an attribute of God and invites us to be 'merciful' in the same ways as God is merciful.

- ✚ Think of someone you know to be a merciful person. In what ways does that person reflect God's mercy?

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

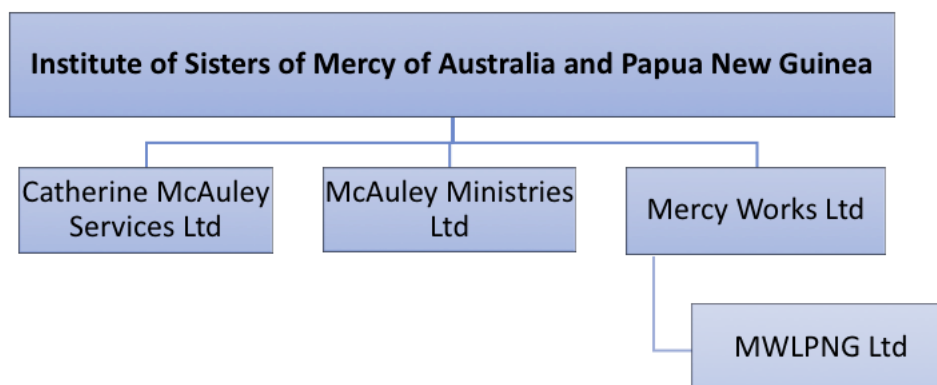
Madeline Duckett rsm, *Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table*, p. 95

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.

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.



[Note: MWLPNG is Mercy Works Limited Papua New Guinea]

MODULE 6

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)

MODULE 6

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/>

MODULE 6

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?

MODULE 6

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 journey?

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

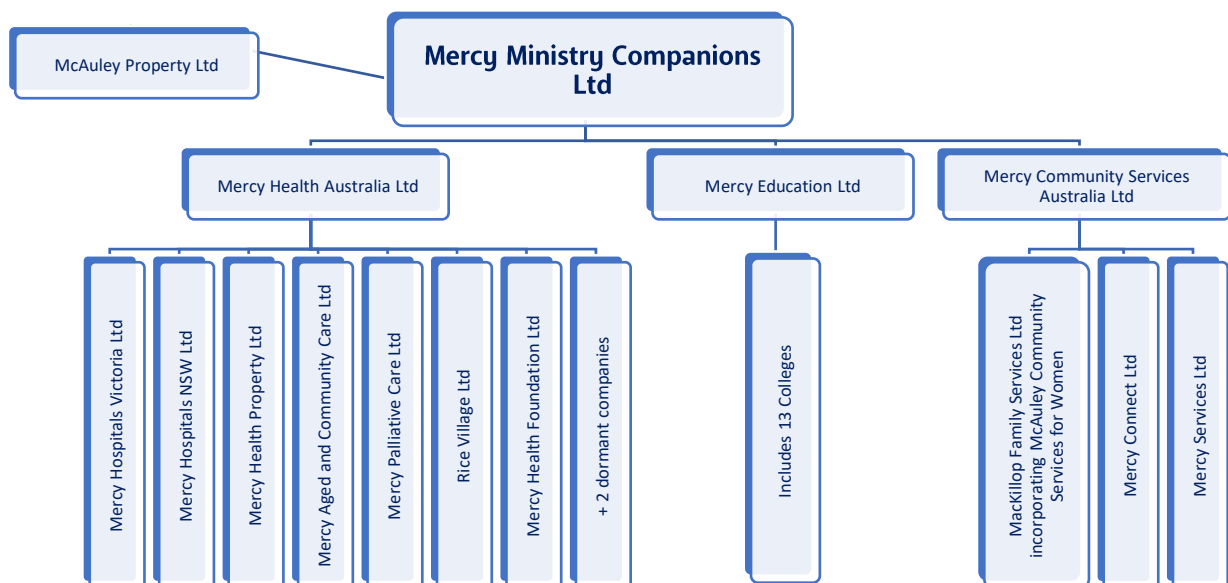
MMC is a ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP), working with the Bishops, Religious Congregations and another 12 MPJPs to further the mission of the Catholic Church in Australia. To find out more about MPJPs in Australia, explore the link below. The first resource listed provides a brief animated 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?

MODULE 8

The Wider Mercy Family & Mercy Values

Watch the Introduction to Module 8 video clip [here](#). (Note that in previous versions, this module was Module 7).

Introduction to Module 8

In this module, we introduce the wider Mercy Family to which ISMAPNG and Mercy Ministry Companions belong, and briefly look at some ministries and international initiatives, focusing on the common mission that brings us all together. *You are part of this family through your involvement in a ministry with a 'mercy heritage'*. We also consider some of the values which are core to the expression of our mercy ministry.

You will need access to a copy of your organisation's mission, vision and values statements for one of the activities in this module.

Opening Reflection

There is a Wideness in God's Mercy

There is a wideness in God's Mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There is a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than in heaven.
There is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgement given.

For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind.
At the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful,
we would gladly trust God's Word,
and our lives reflect thanksgiving
for the goodness of our Lord

Taken from <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Mercy>

On the following page, you can read a brief summary of four key aspects of the wider Mercy family [Mercy International Association (MIA); Mercy Global Presence; the MIA Vision Statement and 'the One Mercy Mission' in which we are engaged and to which we each contribute in our local area].

You can explore more detailed information through the links provided.

MODULE 8

The Wider Mercy Family & Mercy Values

Mercy International Association

Mercy International Association (MIA) was formed in 1994. Its members are the Mercy Institutes, Congregations or Federations in the Americas, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, Newfoundland, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. The first house of Mercy, in Baggot Street, Dublin, is the location of Mercy International Centre, the focal point for many of the activities of MIA and a place of pilgrimage for many mercy women, men and young people inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley. Further information about MIA can be found at

<https://www.mercyworld.org/>

Mercy Global Presence

MIA describes Mercy Global Presence as “*an organic entity and a countercultural sign in a globalized world which has made more extreme the displacement of persons and degradation of Earth.*” Mercy sisters from the member congregations, institutes and federations, their ministry partners and Associates are currently exploring this in greater depth through prayerful reflection, poems, artwork, grassroots ministry experiences and a systemic change lens. Further information can be found at

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mercy-global-presence/>

MIA Vision Statement

The current MIA Vision statement was approved by the MIA Board and launched at the start of the 25th anniversary year of MIA, in early 2019. The concept of Mercy Global Presence is core to the renewed Vision, with an emphasis on the invitation to all members of the wider Mercy family to help bring this vision to life. On the MIA website you will find the Vision Statement in the 8 languages spoken across the Mercy world. Further details at

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/vision-strategy/>

One Mercy Mission

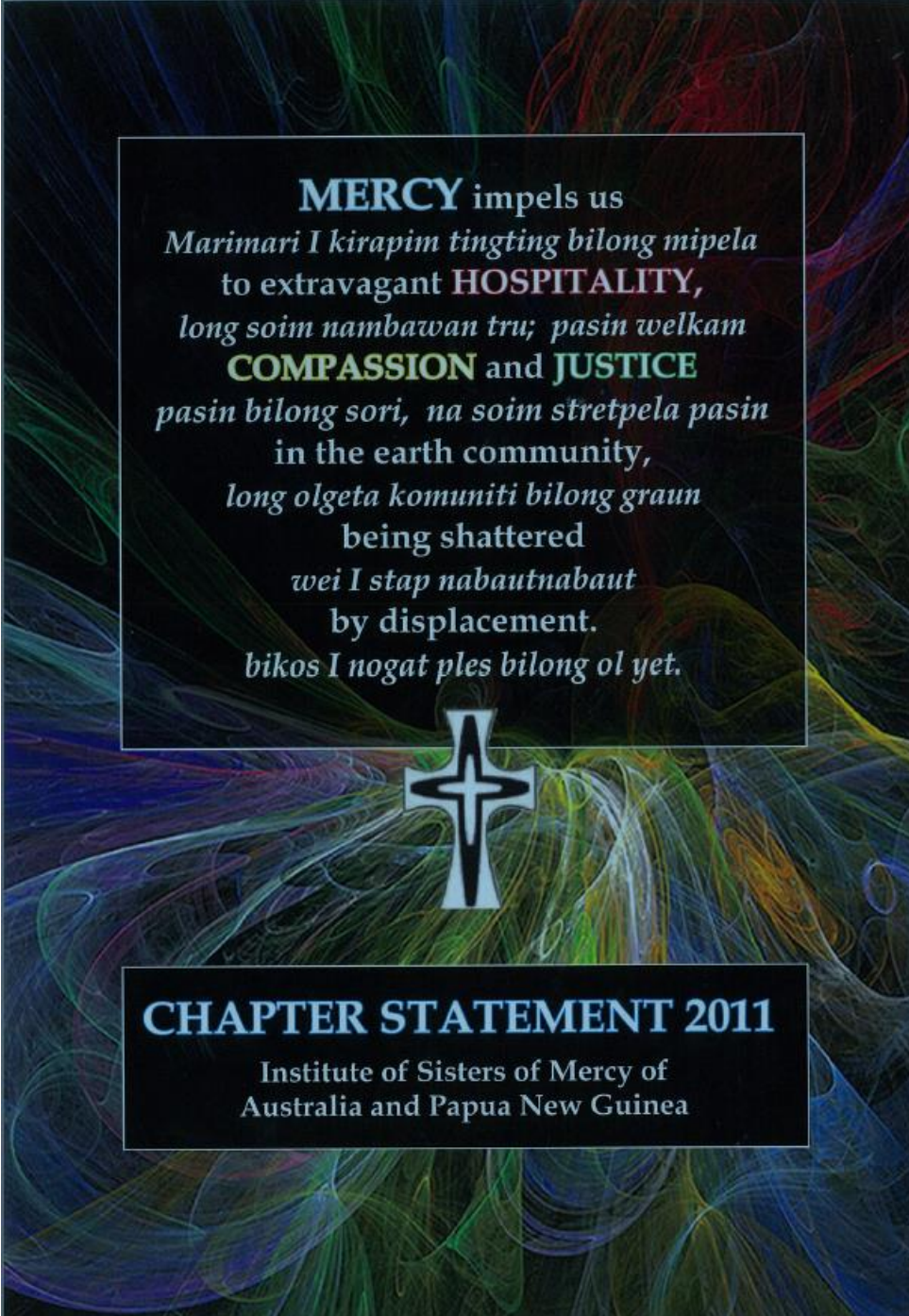
In the inspirational section of the Constitutions of ISMAPNG, we are reminded of Catherine McAuley's teaching that ‘*Mercy is the principal path marked out by Jesus for those who desire to follow him.*’ (Original Rule, p. 304) There are many ways of responding mercifully to those in need, to heed the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Each ministry is called to meet a particular need, as expressed in its Mission, Vision or Values Statement. As the ISMAPNG Constitutions emphasize ‘*whatever and wherever our ministry is, however,*

MODULE 8

The Wider Mercy Family & Mercy Values

we are part of the one mercy mission, part of the ongoing mission of the compassionate Jesus.' (Constitutions 4.03)

Mercy Values



MERCY impels us
Marimari I kirapim tingting bilong mipela
to extravagant **HOSPITALITY**,
long soim nambawan tru; pasin welkam
COMPASSION and **JUSTICE**
pasin bilong sori, na soim stretpela pasin
in the earth community,
long olgeta komuniti bilong graun
being shattered
wei I stap nabautnabaut
by displacement.
bikos I nogat ples bilong ol yet.

CHAPTER STATEMENT 2011
Institute of Sisters of Mercy of
Australia and Papua New Guinea

MODULE 8

The Wider Mercy Family & Mercy Values

Take some time to read your organisation's Mission/Vision/Values statements.

What are the Mercy values named in your ministry's statements?

What connections, if any, do you notice between these values and those stated by Mercy International Association and ISMAPNG's stated aim or its Chapter Statements?

Concluding Reflection

Much has been explored in these eight Orientation modules. There will be other opportunities provided to enhance your understanding and appreciation of 'mercy' as it is lived out in the tradition of Catherine McAuley in a wide range of contexts.

More than ever, we are called to be people of hope, to welcome and encourage others and help them to find a sense of purpose. No matter their background, language, culture or faith tradition, for many people we encounter, **we are a face of mercy** for them.

As you reflect on the following words of Mary Sullivan, give thanks for the opportunity you have, as a member of the Mercy family, to sow seeds of hope in the life of another, and then another and then another ...

CATHERINE'S EMBRACE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

'If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it – one person at a time:
one answering of the figurative door,
one embrace of the stranger,
one welcoming of the other,
one sharing of our bread and milk –
one person at a time.'

(Sullivan, 1996, in *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy*, p. 931)

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