



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 35, May 2025

## Dear Associates and Sisters,

Earlier this month we held a Zoom meeting to provide a briefing for Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends about the **Pilgrimage of Hope** being led by ISMAPNG from June to December this year.

**The pilgrimage is not a physical journey, rather, it is a spiritual journey that will take place over a seven month period.** Each month, a set of resources will become available via the ISMAPNG website that can be used either individually or by your Mercy Associates or Mercy Friends group.

The timing of the Pilgrimage of Hope corresponds to the Jubilee Year of Hope proclaimed for this liturgical year by the late Pope Francis.

Marg, Anna, Phil and I believe the Pilgrimage of Hope provides a wonderful opportunity for Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends to enrich their spiritual lives. It provides a means of inner renewal, with the sense of a spiritual journey. Christians understand life to be a journey, in which we strive to draw closer to God and are ever-open to receiving the riches of God's grace.

Our motto—**One Charism, Many Paths**—also implies a sense of movement, a journey along life's path. We are created uniquely by a God who loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. As we move through life, we deepen our faith and prayer life.

Marg, Ann, Phil and I will be in touch with each group regularly during the seven months of the Pilgrimage. Participation is voluntary. Having said this, we invite you to think about the personal benefits you and your group might gain through participation.

In this edition of **Many Paths**, Anna has prepared an article about journalling. This is something she's done



*Mercy ... Marimari*  
Our  
**Pilgrimage of Hope**  
wokabut bilong yumi long Hope

for many years, and it lends itself very well to a pilgrimage. Journalling is a very individual, personal act that enables us to reflect on how we're going in life and in the pilgrimage. As well, an online pilgrimage group will be formed just for the seven month duration of the pilgrimage, and details are provided.

Later this week, the monthly prayer and reflection resource will be sent out. This has been prepared by Marg and focuses on preparing ourselves to accept the invitation to undertake a pilgrimage.

Also in this edition is an article about what a pilgrimage is, a report from the annual meeting of the Mercy Associates Leadership Group held in Sydney in March (thank you to Marg and Phil for preparing this); and material on National Reconciliation Week.

**We invite you to journey with us from June to December on the Pilgrimage of Hope...**

Carmel Ross  
Executive Officer

If we are humble  
and sincere, God  
will finish the work  
in us He has begun.

Familiar Instructions,  
p. 143



## Seven steps of pilgrimage (ISMAPNG)

Below is the outline of the 'steps' we will undertake during the seven months of the Pilgrimage of Hope:

**Invitation to pilgrimage** and readiness for inner and outer engagement – as you accepted the invitation and prepare for the experience what is your desire for this experience? (June)

**Packing and leaving** – traditionally pilgrims pack lightly both in terms of their material belongings and in their readiness to empty their minds and hearts so as to leave space to engage fully with the journey ahead, what do you need to leave behind? (July)

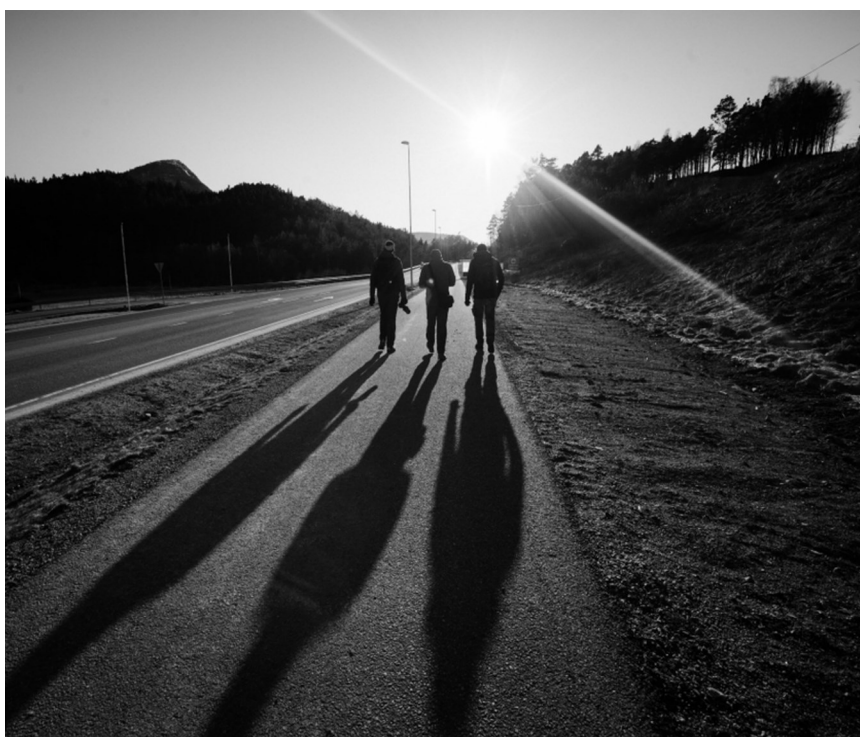
**Becoming present and attentive** – on arrival how do you become present and attentive to the journey itself, to what is going on in you, to the encounter with others and your new surroundings? (August)

**Alone and in community** – what do you encounter in others as you journey, where is the time and space for reflection and renewal? (September)

**Engagement and experience with unknown** – at times you will experience the dislocation and alienation of the journey of that day, where you are not sure of the way forward or how to make sense of what's going on inside. How will you stay engaged with the experience and with the journey to allow it to take you to new places, insights, understandings, discoveries of self and others? (October)

**Encounter the Sacred** – throughout the journey you are invited to contemplate the mystery of the sacred and to attend to the movement of the spirit both within yourself and revealed in your surroundings. (November)

**Pilgrim living** – at the end of your journey how will you continue to live out of the new insights, inspirations and understandings? (December)



### Prayer Companions

During the pilgrimage, you may want to increase or strengthen your prayer life. There are many ways to work on this, but one helpful approach might be to **find a prayer companion**.

This might be a friend, a member of your Mercy Associates group, someone from your parish, even a family member. From time to time, you meet up (online or in person) to chat about how your prayer is going, share ideas and progress. A great way to journey together with a companion...



## What's a Pilgrimage?

A **pilgrimage** is a journey or search of spiritual significance. Usually, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith. A pilgrimage can be understood as **sacred travel**. The practice of pilgrimage is an element of all major world religions.

The purpose of Christian pilgrimage has been summarized by Pope Benedict XVI this way:

*To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendour and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe.*

For Christians, the most common pilgrimage destination is the Holy Land. Additional to travel to the Holy Land, for those of the Catholic tradition, travel to the Vatican, especially to St Peter's Square is popular – think about the number of people from around the world who have visited St Peter's Square in these recent weeks.

In the Mercy tradition, pilgrimage to Catherine's House at Baggot St in Dublin is common. It provides the opportunity to personally encounter her context and be immersed in the life of Dublin in the past and today.

## The Pilgrimage of Hope

A pilgrimage is most briefly defined as involving **place, space and time**.

For our **Pilgrimage of Hope**, **place** will be local – we are not travelling to a distant country or location, we are staying home! We will each need to identify how we will create a sense of place – will there be a local church we visit? A local park? A spot in our garden? A quiet time in our home when everyone else is out and we have silence around us?

**Space** is a more abstract concept. For our Pilgrimage, space will be 'psychological' or head space, where we temporarily set aside our daily responsibilities of work and family and allocate our attention (and emotions) to the experience of the pilgrimage. It is the practice of being present to yourself and to God, not distracted by the normal concerns of the day. Practices such as quiet deep breathing can help to still us so we can create a space within us for prayer and reflection.

**Time** is an important element of a pilgrimage. Time is needed to enter into the 'space' of the pilgrimage and absorb its importance and personal application. To maximise the spiritual graces this pilgrimage may provide, time cannot be rushed. It will be important to allocate periods of time to individual reflection and prayer so the maximum benefit can be attained. In your life, are there some pockets of time each day, or even a few times a week, where you can be alone for a while?

Adapted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrimage>;

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/pilgrimage-religion>;

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/november/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20101106\\_cattedrale-compostela.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20101106_cattedrale-compostela.html); <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pilgrimage-religion>



# Recording Your Pilgrimage Journey



I have been a 'journaller' for many years now. I first started journalling as a young mum, hoping to carve out some precious time for myself, prayer and spiritual growth, and it is a practice that I have continued right to this present day.

Over the years, I have learnt that journals aren't about the writing – they're about the memories - the special encounters and moments, that we capture and record. And so therefore, journals can be more than prose or words but can take many other forms. Here are just some ideas:

- ◆ Photos
- ◆ Drawings and artwork
- ◆ Prayer folders
- ◆ Pictures cut out from magazines
- ◆ Scrapbooks
- ◆ Poems and lyrics of songs (I have a few playlists on Spotify that I think of as 'Soundtracks to my life')
- ◆ Colour-coded diaries

As we prepare to begin our pilgrimage together, consider some ways that you might be able to document your journey in a way that reflects who you are.



**Happy journalling!**

**Anna McGookin,**

VIC and SA Mercy Associates Network Facilitator

**WE JOURNEY THROUGH THE JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE AS PILGRIMS...**

**AS PEOPLE OF FAITH AND MERCY, WE JOURNEY TOGETHER.**

## Online Pilgrimage of Hope group option

We are hoping that as many Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends groups as possible will embark on this pilgrimage as individual groups. However, we understand that this may not be possible for all, so another option available during the seven months of the Pilgrimage of Hope for those unable to journey with their own group, is to participate in an online (Zoom) group that will meet each month.

**The online group will meet on the third Wednesday of each month, from 7.30 to 8.10pm pm EST, with the first meeting being on June 18<sup>th</sup>.** The purpose of meeting together is to pray together and to provide an opportunity to share our pilgrimage journey, with a focus on the spiritual insights and/or challenges we have experienced on the way. Please be assured that no one will be required to share unless they choose to do so. Everyone is welcome to journey together in silence if they choose to do so.

**If you would like to participate in this group, please contact Phil Billington**, NSW Network Facilitator, at [mercyassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercyassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au)

The group will be hosted by Margery Jackman from the Providence group.

**One important point to note is that participation in this online group is not a replacement for your involvement in your usual Mercy Associates or Mercy Friends group.** You will continue to be a member of your local group, which will need your ongoing involvement as it journeys through the pilgrimage too. This initiative is to supplement your involvement in your local group.

**This group will only run for the seven months of the pilgrimage, with its final meeting being on December 17<sup>th</sup>.**



## As we approach the feast of Pentecost

God of all people,  
send forth your Holy Spirit  
into my heart that I may perceive,  
into my mind that I may remember,  
and into my soul that I may meditate.  
Inspire me to speak with piety, holiness, tenderness and mercy.  
Teach, guide and direct my thoughts  
and senses from beginning to end.  
May your grace ever help and correct me,  
and may I be strengthened now with  
wisdom from on high,  
for the sake of your infinite mercy.  
Amen.

Saint Anthony of Padua



Image: He Qi, Pentecost

Prayer: [https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Pentecost.htm#gsc.tab=0](https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Pentecost.htm#gsc.tab=0)

# National Reconciliation Week 2025

In common with the experience of First Nations peoples in other continents who have experienced colonisation over the last few centuries, Australia's indigenous peoples—Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—have experienced immense suffering, including spiritual, physical, medical, educational and economic disadvantages, as well as displacement from their ancestral lands. Recognition of their innate human dignity, including their equality with all humankind, is a slow and challenging process. It is what Reconciliation is about.

God's love for each one of us, along with our Baptismal vocation to work towards the reign of God, call us to be attentive and responsive to the needs of our fellow human beings. This week is **National Reconciliation Week**. The information below may be helpful to Mercy Associates as they consider their response to the needs of Australia's indigenous peoples.

**National Reconciliation Week** is held from 27 May to 3 June each year. These dates commemorate two significant milestones in the history of Australia's indigenous peoples – the successful [1967 referendum](#), and the [High Court Mabo decision](#) respectively.

Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2025 theme, *Bridging Now to Next*, reflects the ongoing connection between past, present and future.

*Bridging Now to Next* calls on all Australians to step forward together, to look ahead and continue the push forward as past lessons guide us.

In the #NRW2025 theme artwork (*at right*) created by Kalkadoon woman [Bree Buttenshaw](#), native plants – which are known for regenerating after fire and thriving through adversity – symbolise our collective strength and the possibilities of renewal. This is a time for growth, reflection, and commitment to walking together.



Australia's history of reconciliation is not a linear one, we have made great strides and experienced disappointing setbacks.

Each of us has a role to play when it comes to reconciliation, and in playing our part we collectively build relationships and communities that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, and futures.

Adapted from: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/>



## Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends – Sowers of Seeds and Nurturers of Hope

In 2016, the Institute Leadership Team of IS-MAPNG endorsed the implementation of the new vision and model for **Mercy Associates** and **Mercy Friends**, with provision of ongoing resourcing. Among the hopes and intentions of ISMAPNG are the *renewal, rejuvenation and expansion of existing Mercy Associates groups, and encouragement and support in the formation of new groups*. In tandem with this is the need to establish a coordinated approach to operating and supporting Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends groups, and to improve connections among the groups. The **Mercy Associates Leadership Group (MALG)** is the advisory group that meets to do this work.

With Network Facilitators (Anna, Phil and Marg) and Executive Officer (Carmel) MALG members provide support, feedback, wisdom and visioning concerning the progress of the Mercy Associates/Mercy Friends movement as it continues to evolve. Members of the group come from different locations, age groups and styles of groups. It includes representatives of the Mercy Associates groups in Australia and Mercy Friends groups in Papua New Guinea and a member of the Institute Leadership Team.

MALG members meet face-to-face on an annual basis (in Sydney) and connect throughout the year via email. They consider issues from an Institute-wide and visionary perspective and serve the Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends movement and its ongoing progress and renewal.

*Pictured at right is our current MALG.*

This year our March gathering was facilitated by Caroline Thompson and focused us on our call as Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends to be *Sowers of Seeds and Nurturers of Hope*. Drawing on the parable of the Sower and the Seed, we reflected on the key elements of Mercy leadership as lived by Catherine, the weeds and thorns that get in the way of Mercy and the hope that lies at the heart of Mercy ministries which we imaged as sunshine and water that nurtures seeds of life. We reflected prayerfully and moved into future thinking and conversation around *building strong communities of Mercy* throughout the diversity of groups and individuals that form the Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends movement.

**On the next page the key priorities that emerged from our discussions are presented—** please turn over to see them!

.../continued over



### As we journey, we pray:

God of all people and God of all creation,

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, where your glory will shine eternally.

May the same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise forever. Amen.

## Key Priorities for Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends

The following **Key Priorities** and opportunities that arose from our discussions will assist us in **Building Strong Communities of Mercy** and **Animating the Mercy Associates Vision** are:

To build strong communities of Mercy Associates across Australia and and Mercy Friends in Papua New Guinea through **Networking and Reaching Out**. Some suggestions for local groups and online groups include:

*Regular links* with other Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends groups including MALG meetings

*Reaching out* to those who no longer attend to perhaps become friends of Mercy or older members to be Honorary Associates/Friends. Providing opportunities for healing for those members lost through the Covid pandemic and changes in compliance

*Creating a space TO BE* - some will follow the path of Mercy Associates whilst others will be nourished by the Spirituality, Prayer and Friendship as active support in their roles as care-givers – all sharing our varied life stories and living Mercy Values.

Find ways to *partner with other groups* in the community beyond Mercy Associates/Friends either individually or as a group – Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends are practical people of Prayer, Mission and Action!

To **support Mercy Associates Groups** through

Offering support for leaders and groups both in person and online through *formation experiences* such as:

*Workshops and retreats* on specific topics such as Mercy Spirituality, the life of Catherine McAuley and the giftedness of each person...

*Additional Prayer and Meeting resources* supported by Network Facilitators as requested.

To be **Active Witnesses to Mercy** in the Community through

Opportunities for *leadership formation* for all members based on 'Be As Shining Lamps' and other experiences and resources

Invitations to consider Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends through '*Come and See*' gatherings, outreach to Mercy school staff leaders and members, and updates in the Parish and School Bulletins.

Prepared by Marg Trevethan and Phil Billington

'Let us ask the Lord for the grace always to welcome this seed that is his Word. And if we realize we are not a fruitful soil, let us not be discouraged, but let us ask him to work on us more to make us become a better terrain.'

– Pope Leo XIV

General Audience 21 May 2025



#MercyMoment  
www.mercyworld.org

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