



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 36, July 2025

Dear Associates, Friends and Sisters,

We are now more than half way through the **Jubilee Year of Hope**. Many of you have joined with the Sisters to participate in the Pilgrimage of Hope that began in June and will end in December.



One of the source scripture passages for the logo is below, from the letter to the Hebrews:

May we who have taken refuge in him be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered. (Heb 6:18-20)

We journey together, hence the group of four people in the logo, and we have the anchor of our faith that is the origin of our hope.

It is wonderful to witness the involvement of so many Mercy Associates and Mercy Friends in the ISMAPNG Pilgrimage of Hope. Some are participating as individuals, others are part of their group's initiatives overall. In this edition of **Many Paths** there are two articles about these, one from the online group hosted by the Providence Mercy Asso-



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

ciates, and another from Mercy Friends in Wewak. This Pilgrimage has many months to run, so if you haven't been part of it yet but are interested, look up: <https://institute.mercy.org.au/pilgrimage/> and you'll see resources there that you can use for yourself or for your group.

Among the other articles in this newsletter are two that are reflections on gospel passages that are about hope. One concerns the parable of the Sower, and is a reflection by Pope Leo; the second concerns the Walk to Emmaus, and is a reflection by Liz Dowling rsm—taken from the Pilgrimage of Hope resources on the ISMAPNG website.

And there is also some very good news of a new Mercy Friends group forming in the PNG Highlands! Please keep this group in your prayers as they establish themselves in their local community.

Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**



We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.

*Letter to de Sales White
December 20, 1840*



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)



Request for prayers for Chris Convery

Please join us in praying for Christine Convery, the previous NSW Network Facilitator for Mercy Associates. Earlier this year, Chris was diagnosed with cancer. She has had surgery and is now undergoing follow-up treatment. As with many such diagnoses, the journey ahead will be a challenging one.

Please pray for Chris.

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Online Pilgrimage of Hope Gatherings

Sponsored by the NSW Providence Group, the *Online Pilgrimage of Hope* has quickly spread out across Australia and Papua New Guinea, with Mercy Friends, Mercy Associates from other groups and friends of Associates all walking together in Hope.

Our monthly online meetings are planned around the wonderful Mercy Associates' Prayer Reflections which we receive each month. They consist of shared prayer, silent reflection and discussion of some of the key questions posed each month in the pilgrimage material. At our last meeting one of our pilgrims shared her experience of journalling and for our next meeting another pilgrim has distributed articles on hope as a basis for deeper reflection. Each month, pilgrims who would like to, are invited to prepare a section of the next meeting so our journey is genuinely one of walking together.

We welcome anyone who would like to join us on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, on Zoom from 7.30 - 8.15pm AEST - the quiet, the confident, the experienced, those new to pilgrimage, those just curious, those with Mercy connections and those without, those who can come every month and those who just drop in when they can. All are welcome! Please email Phil Billington at philomenabillington@gmail.com if you would like her to send you the link to join us. The next online gathering will be on **Wednesday, 20th August**. May our God of Mercy, continue to bless us, each one.

Margery Jackman, Providence Group



Through hope, we yearn to enter fully into the promise and joy of the gospel.

We light candles not only of hope but also of peace, of love, and of joy.

We are called to have reborn in us kindness, generosity, compassion and love.

Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope.



We acknowledge with respect and gratitude the original peoples of the nations and lands from which we come and their cultures.

Acknowledgement of Place and People



'.....if you give yourself entirely to God - all you have to serve Him - every power of your mind and heart - you will have a consolation you will not know where it comes from.'

Catherine McAuley

#MercyMoment
www.mercyworld.org



From Mercy Friends—Embracing the Pilgrimage of Hope

The pilgrimage of hope for Mercy Friends in East Sepik began with a recollection retreat on the 6th and 7th of June 2025 at the Kaindi Mercy Sisters Convent, Wewak, ESP, Papua New Guinea.

A total of 24 adults and 5 children joined in spirit in the two days of inspirational sessions. Participants of the recollection retreat were the leaders from Kunjigini, Bapmu and Dagua parishes, members of Kaindi and St Joseph Yarapos Parish, Mercy Sisters in Wewak and Fr Alphonse our Chaplain.

The main facilitators of the retreat were Rosewitha Pingin and Grace Lalio (myself). The sessions captured the definition of pilgrimage, contemplating the pilgrimage of hope, brief history of the jubilee year celebration in the Catholic church, the seven steps of pilgrimage (ISMAPNG) and the reflection on the first step of the pilgrimage, and readiness for inner and outer engagement.

We discussed and reflected prayerfully, in preparation for our journey. The Chaplain ended the program with a Mass commissioning us into the Pilgrimage of Hope. The leaders of Mercy Friends took the materials back to their groups and shared in their own vernacular. To God be the Glory.

Grace Lalio, Wewak



Mercy Mission Formation Network conference in Cairns

In early May, I had the privilege of attending the Mercy Mission Formation Network (MMFN) annual gathering as a representative of Mercy Associates. This network has been meeting since 2009 and is attended by people engaged in the many mercy ministries, congregations and institutes of Australia and New Zealand.

The gathering was held just up the road at the Seville Mercy Centre, Cairns, where we were surrounded by beautiful rainforest and inspiring mercy people from a diverse range of places, ages and initiatives. Our theme, was *Casting the Net – The Conversion of Processes*. We explored the possibilities of a synodal approach. Susan Pascoe AM was a guest speaker who shared her experience of the Synod in Rome and the possibilities for the Church as synodality is put into practice. We then had the practical opportunity to apply some of the processes using a resource called *The Synodal Way* recently published by Caroline Thompson and Libby Blom in the various workshops. A highlight for me was participating in an Ecological Stations of the Cross led by Priscilla O'Brien from Seville.

We experienced wonderful hospitality from Seville. We shared prayer times and meals and enjoyed great networking opportunities as we were informed about the work and aspirations of other ministries and networks, including Young Mercy Links. Sr Faye Kelly shared the journey of the Sisters of Mercy in Far North Queensland, from their arrival in Cooktown in 1888 until the present day. Together we celebrated our work for mercy and kindled our passion for the call to continue to spread the blessings of mercy in wider and wider circles. I came away inspired.

**Marg
Trevethan,**
Network
Facilitator,
Queensland



Expansion of Mercy Friends into Highlands

A new group of Mercy Friends has been established in Papua New Guinea, in the Pumakos Parish of the Wabag Diocese. In the photo of the group, Sr Philomena is on the far left and Sr Mariana on the right side in a blue shirt.

Sr Philomena Wairasm



Damper feast for Ballarat Associates



On Monday 26th of May thirteen lucky people enjoyed a delicious lunch; it was tasty, educational and entertaining.

Our 'chef', Mollie Cleary's table display consisting of a variety of herbs, spices and indigenous recipe books set the scene for the day. She shared her culinary insights, gained from years as a Food Technology teacher, as she prepared a damper (unlike any I have tasted). Margaret McDonald's stories and anecdotes also gathered from her years as a Food Technology teacher added to the event. All present contributed their own stories and experiences of using indigenous ingredients as we waited for the damper to cook.

The aromas from the oven certainly whetted our appetites for lunch. Members brought along a variety of foods to add to the 'star of the show', the damper. Animated conversations continued throughout the meal.

Mary, Ballarat



God of all people, we pray for Muslims, Jews and Christians, that we will draw on the best of our traditions to guide us away from words and acts of division and discrimination so that everyone may be free to live in freedom and safety. Protect the vulnerable, strengthen the fearful and comfort the grieving. In Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/prayers-peace-and-hope>



Gladstone formation on Corporal Works of Mercy

“Catherine McAuley declared the ‘Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy’ to be the business of our lives.” [Mary Sullivan rsm, 2004]

Our Mercy Associates chose earlier this year, for three of their monthly gatherings, to reflect and share upon **‘Living the Corporal Works of Mercy’** from Caroline Thompson’s book **Be As Shining Lamps**. We were led by one of our own Associates – Michele.

We reflected upon Claire Agnew’s illustrations. But what gave us greater conversation and input was the prayer attached. These prayers raised many questions on how we were living our lives and what could we improve upon. The prayer below is an example. We also answered the attached question.

Enthusiastic open sharing occurred about what was occurring in our Parish and City community, where there were ‘gaps’ and what we could do to assist and support those needs.

As Pope Francis said in 2016, *‘The works of mercy affect a person’s entire life. For this reason, we can set in motion a real cultural revolution beginning with simple gestures capable of reaching body and spirit’*.

Dorothy Leech

Corporal Works of Mercy

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

God of Abundance.

May we be ever attentive to the hunger which surrounds us:

Hunger for food and nutrition among those living in poverty or social upheaval;

Hunger for kindness in those living with loneliness and heart-break:

Hunger for justice in those marginalised and downtrodden:

Hunger for meaning, for hope. for forgiveness, for love ...

May we always show mercy to those in need. Amen

Where is the hunger in your community?

Be As Shining Lamps, Caroline Thompson, Mercy Partners.



Image: Clare Agnew RSM, copyright Mercy International Association.

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

- feed the hungry
- give drink to the thirsty
- give alms to the poor
- shelter the homeless
- visit the sick
- visit the imprisoned
- bury the dead

Christian discipleship asks for both intimacy with Jesus and attention to what he taught: personal piety and social justice, firm loyalty to one’s own ecclesial family and the capacity to also embrace all others of sincere heart as one’s faith family. Soren Kierkegaard once suggested that what Jesus really wants is followers, not admirers. The earliest preachers of the Gospel would agree that we need to proclaim both, the message of Jesus and Jesus himself.

Ron Rolheiser omi

The Parable of the Sower—a parable of Hope

Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.*² He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: *³ “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell on a path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”*⁹ And he said, “If you have ears to hear, then hear!”

Mark 4:1-9

Recently Pope Leo preached about this parable:

I have in mind that beautiful painting by Van Gogh, **The sower at sunset**. That image of the sower in the blazing sun also speaks to me of the farmer's toil. And it strikes me that, behind the sower, Van Gogh depicted the grain already ripe. It seems to me an image of hope: one way or another, the seed has borne fruit. We are not sure how, but it has. At the centre of the scene, however, is not the sower, who stands to the side; instead, the whole painting is dominated by the image of the sun, perhaps to remind us that it is God who moves history, even if he sometimes seems absent or distant. It is the sun that warms the clods of earth and makes the seed ripen.



In telling the way in which the seed bears fruit, Jesus is also talking about his life. Jesus is the Word, he is the Seed. And the seed, to bear fruit, must die. Thus, this parable tells us that God is ready to ‘waste away’ for us and that Jesus is willing to die in order to transform our life.

Every parable tells a story that is taken from everyday life, yet wants to tell us something more, to refer us to a deeper meaning. The parable raises questions in us; it invites us not to stop at appearances. Before the story that is told or the image that is presented to me, I can ask myself: **Where am I in this story? What does this image say to my life?**

A rather unusual sower goes out to sow, but does not care where the seed falls. He throws the seeds even where it is unlikely they will bear fruit: on the path, on the rocks, among the thorns. This attitude surprises the listener and induces him to ask: how come?

God is confident and hopes that sooner or later the seed will blossom. This is how he loves us: he does not wait for us to become the best soil, but he always generously gives us his word. Perhaps by seeing that he trusts us, the desire to be better soil will be kindled in us. **This is hope, founded on the rock of God's generosity and mercy.**

Pope Leo XIV, General Audience, 21.05.2025

The Walk to Emmaus

a Reflection by Liz Dowling RSM

Two disciples are heading away from Jerusalem, away from the community of disciples, on their way to Emmaus. They were devastated and **had lost hope**. What do we do now? Where do we go? These questions are familiar to us all at different stages in our lives, particularly when we may lose hope in the face of devastation both personally and globally.

Yet, it is through their encounter with the risen Jesus, someone they did not immediately recognise, that **they came to experience a sense of hope** that brings about transformation for them. In recognising Jesus, they say, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road” (Luke 24:32).

The word ‘burning’ is translated from the Greek word ‘kaíō’ that means to burn, light and to kindle.

You don’t go from devastation to euphoria and hearts burning within us instantaneously. You need something to provide the spark in the devastation which will eventually increase in intensity. On the road, they have a spark in the midst of their devastation and it is in the breaking of the bread [afterwards] that this spark bursts into flame when they recognise Jesus.

All of a sudden they have got hope. The hope brings transformation. They get up and go straight to Jerusalem, back to the community and this is the start of a whole new chapter in their story.

There is never an endpoint to hope: we are always on the journey with hope.



The Road to Emmaus, Daniel Bonnell

Elizabeth Dowling rsm, <https://institute.mercy.org.au/pilgrimage/step-one-invitation-to-pilgrimage/>

Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Hope

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.
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,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.
May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

