



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 37, September 2025

Dear Associates, Friends and Sisters,

Welcome to this new edition of **Many Paths**.

We're almost at the end of the **Season of Creation**—it will close on Saturday 4th October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. St Francis was a man of courage, faith and vision. The following quote from Wikipedia indicates the power of Francis's teaching to influence those of us living centuries after him:

"On 29 November 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Francis the patron saint of **ecology**. On 28 March 1982, he said that Francis' love and care for creation was a challenge for contemporary Catholics and a reminder 'not to behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but to assume responsibility for it, taking all care so that everything stays healthy and integrated, so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us.' The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote

ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples."

In this edition, there is an article from Sally Neaves, Integral Ecology Officer for ISMAPNG, with the new framework. The article contains many practical ideas, underpinned by the realization that care of our common home is not optional—it's a responsibility each of us holds, to exercise to the best of our ability.

A special moment is happening in **Papua New Guinea**, and Grace Lalio from Mercy Friends has drawn our attention to it. PNG has just celebrated 50 years of independence, a time of great joy for the country. There are multiple groups of Mercy Friends now operating in PNG, guided by Grace and Sr Philomena Wairasm. As this small but vibrant nation celebrates an important milestone, please pray for the people of PNG, and especially for the Mercy Friends groups there.

And we have included a letter from **Christine Convery**, the previous NSW Network Facilitator. Chris reports making progress in her treatment, but she remains in need of our ongoing prayer support.

I hope that your **Mercy Day** celebrations were joyful and prayerful and wish you well for these remaining months of 2025.

Carmel Ross, **Executive Officer**



Confidence in God causes us to hope, for everything comes from His paternal goodness.

Catherine McAuley, *Familiar Instructions*, p. 137



From Chris Convery...

Dear Mercy folk,

Thank you to all who have been praying for my healing. Having triple negative breast cancer (apparently the worst type of breast cancer), has been a new challenge and each step of treatment has seemed like a new hurdle to overcome along the way.

However, I have now completed a course of radiotherapy and am looking forward to feeling a little better in a few weeks' time. The fatigue at present, is quite debilitating.

I've been reading a little book, *Soar Above The Storm; A 40-Day Devotional*, by Nick Hawkes, and am finding it very helpful. Nick "draws on his own experiences of storm-walking with cancer to encourage you to find rest and hope in God amidst your suffering" (from the book's back cover). Also, in reading more of our beloved Catherine McAuley and her letters, I have found much solace.

It's with hope and courage from God that I know my life and health will be restored. With these great gifts, that in no small way have come to me through your constant prayers, I'm able to live and face each day's challenges. It gives me great joy and comfort to know I am in your thoughts and prayers. In God's good time, all will be well.

I continue to hold you all in my prayers and think of you, often, with much fondness.

Blessings in Mercy, always,

Chris. Convery

P.S. John and I were able to have dinner out to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary on August 29th - a simple, quiet affair.



Online Pilgrimage of Hope Gathering

The online gathering of pilgrims continues to explore our personal responses to the pilgrimage. Numbers fluctuate and that is as it should be, with regulars, the occasional drop in and the one-time visitor all very welcome. We especially appreciate the contributions of our Papua New Guinea Friends and look forward to seeing them – even when it means that they are joining us from the street to make the connection!



Our meetings follow a regular pattern of prayer, silent contemplation of a scripture passage followed by shared discussion based on the pilgrimage material for the month and a final blessing.

We meet on Zoom on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7.30- 8.15pm (AEST) – remember daylight saving starts before this meeting, so be sure to check the correct time for your own time zone. **Our next meeting will be on October 15th.** If you have not joined us before, we would love to see you, as a contributor or as a quiet presence journeying with us. Please email Margery on majackman88@gmail.com if you haven't been before and you would like the link for the October meeting.

Blessings

Margery Jackman

MERCY FRIENDS IN EAST SEPIK CELEBRATING PNG 50 YEARS GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDEPENDENCE WITH MISSIONS TO THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Papua New Guinea celebrated its 50 years Golden Jubilee of Independence on the 16th of September 2025. Prior to the actual date of celebration, the PNG government declared 50 days pre-independence celebration commencing on the 28th June 2025.

First and importantly the Mercy Friends in PNG sincerely acknowledge God for blessing us with a beautiful nation, the Australian Government for granting PNG a peaceful independence back in 1975, and the early missionaries especially the Sisters of Mercy in Australia who missioned in most parts of our country. We are blessed and thankful to be part of ISMAPNG and we continue to maintain and uphold our relationship between our nations.

Mercy Friends and the Sisters in East Sepik celebrated the 50 years Golden Jubilee Independence celebration with a visit to the Boram Correctional Services. We donated more than K3000 worth of fresh garden vegetables, saveloys and toiletries to help 430 inmates. The Officer in Charge for visits received the gift

from us, stating the food items will help subsidize food rations as they are facing an influx of inmates each day.

The visit also coincides with our pilgrimage journey in helping the needy people, we offer prayers for the inmates that they will share and partake the food physically and repent from wrong-doing and receive Jesus as their Lord.

We are planning our last visit for the year to the retired priests and sisters' home of Wewak Diocese early in December before the Mercy Foundation Day.

All Glory to God.

Grace Lalio



Gladstone Recommitment and Mini Retreat

On the 6th September, the Gladstone Mercy Associates were blessed to have the presence of **Sr Berneice Loch RSM** and **Sr Grace Bartolo RSM** for their **3 yearly Recommitment**. A special prayer ceremony was prepared by Marg Trevethan [Qld Mercy Associates Network Facilitator]. This was followed by a Mini Retreat entitled *"Being Present to the Sacred in our Daily Life"*. Marg guided us in a simple process of prayer and reflection, using story and scripture, to discover God amid our busy everyday life and world. It was based on the book *"What's that in Grandad's Garden"*.

The following are reflections that several Associates wrote after our time together:

We were led to examine our commitment to our Faith. We centred ourselves and were asked to remember the message Jesus gave us, to ponder on what we were grateful for and those circumstances where we had difficulty in showing forgiveness. Were we showing generosity and gratitude and finally courage to discern, how we could move forward? *Annette P*

How wonderful to have a book from Koorong as a source/resource. Dad had a wonderful garden begun in 1961, twelve vegetables and flower beds and a chook pen too! I cried most of the morning because we don't have the climbers [bougainvillea] or the palms or the rainforest anymore. Our family home of 65yrs was sold 4 yrs ago and the eleven grandchildren miss it so much, being pushed around in the wheelbarrow, eating fresh vegetables as well as strawberries, carrots and peas. We are all blessed to have such memories, but life goes on for the next generation. *Shaneen*

Marg's words were refreshing and inspiring. We were given a pearl to remind us of the parable from Matthew 'A pearl of great price'. It reminded me to look for the pearl, in the ordinary events of each day. God's love shines through in many different ways, we simply must be aware with grateful hearts. *Trish*

When I walked into the gathering, I felt serenity waft over me [I have been conflicted] over a friend's comments about her life but I took the time to think about it all. I'm now more centred and went home with a different attitude and it has been better since. Serenity Peace, Love and Acceptance was my gift. *Geraldine*



I found everyone so friendly, and they all wanted to participate. With the Sisters present with us, it was a very special morning. We were all blessed through Marg's gentle presence and her inspirational preparation. *Dorothy*

In conclusion, we shared a delicious lunch, where Fr Andrew joined us.

We celebrated **Mercy Day** in Gladstone Tuesday 23rd September by attending our **Mercy Day Mass** with the Parish community. Annette P welcomed everyone, and Fr Andrew based his reading and Homily/prayers with a focus on the Memorial Mass of St Padre Pio and Catherine's works/teachings. It was wonderful to be able to sing "Circle of Mercy" at Communion time.

Annette Rowe



**Mercy Works warmly invites you to its 25th Anniversary Celebration
and Fundraising event on Thursday 23 October, 5pm–7.30pm, at
St Patrick's Cathedral, Cloister Hall in Parramatta**

The event will feature powerful firsthand accounts from courageous changemakers from Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Timor-Leste. A memorable evening of inspiration, storytelling and connection.

Renowned ABC journalist Geraldine Doogue, a past student of the Sisters of Mercy (Santa Maria College, Perth), will emcee the event, bringing her insight and connection to the Mercy story.

This celebration is an opportunity to honour the achievements of Mercy Works and ensure that its vital work continues for years to come.

Event details

Date: Thursday 23 October 2025

Time: 5:00pm – 7:00pm

Venue: Cloister Hall, behind St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

Tickets: \$60 per person

Live entertainment, drinks and food.

Visit www.mercyworks.org.au to find out more, and RSVP your attendance.

Young and Hennessy link continues

On 18th August seven Hennessy Catholic College students gave a Powerpoint presentation of their recent Cambodia Immersion trip. They were Molly Smithers, Angelic Sutherland, Ed Maloney, Riley Butcher, Dylan Webber and Josh Cameron, (pictured below with Joy Cameron and Phil Billington).

Our Mercy Associates group regularly donates to the nuns at the Orphanage in Cambodia.

We also welcomed the NSW network facilitator Phil Billington to Young for the meeting.

Photo below is Noela Hardman setting up the prayer centre.

Joy Cameron



SIMBU PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA— 14 WATER TANKS IN 28 DAYS!

In May, **Mercy Works** – in partnership with the Diocese of Kundiawa in Simbu Province, Papua New Guinea – undertook an ambitious project to install water tanks into 14 schools in just 28 days. Now hundreds of students, teachers and staff have much improved access to clean water for drinking, handwashing, cooking and cleaning.

Water and sanitation-related diseases are one of the leading causes of death for children under five years in PNG. Sadly, preventable illnesses resulting from inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene practices claim the lives of children daily.

Prior to the installation of the new water tanks, students were required to carry their own water to school. They were often sourcing water from unreliable and unclean water sources such as rivers. Some schools were relying on old water tanks supplying poor quality water due to decay, algae growth and sediment buildup.

Mercy Works' newly installed water tanks are expected to decrease the prevalence of waterborne diseases in these school communities. Handwashing stations encourage the teachers to teach children good handwashing and sanitation practices.

For most schools, the water tank installation is the first significant building and maintenance update to the school in over 50 years. Happy, healthy children correlate with an increase in school attendance and improves a student's ability to focus on their studies.

'Access to reliable, safe water is a basic human right and we are passionate about the tangible health benefits of safe water for everyone. Mercy Works partnered with the Diocese of Kundiawa to identify fourteen local schools that would greatly benefit from a rainwater harvesting and storage system.' Says Andrew Lowry, Overseas Project Coordinator, Mercy Works.

With a group of local tradesmen, the installations began in early May and by mid-June all fourteen schools were equipped with operating water tanks.

Each water tank system includes guttering to collect the rainwater from the roof, a 'first flush diverter' to collect debris from the initial downpour and a disabled-accessible tap point for water collection.

The team of six skilled tradesmen delivered the necessary hardware and installed the tanks in some very challenging locations. This included having to physically carry supplies across rivers and through terrain impassable to vehicles. Terrain so challenging that the local communities helped to carrying in



*Walking Together.
Changing Lives.*

the materials to ensure timely installation of the water tanks.

'We are so encouraged by the success of this initial water tank installation project that we intend to install more water tanks in Simbu over the next 12-months. We couldn't have achieved this work without the support of our incredible Mercy Works donors.' Says Andrew.

Mercy Works has been active in PNG for more than 19 years and is currently conducting projects in two comparatively remote locations in Western Province and in the highlands of Simbu Province. In Simbu, Mercy Works has conducted livelihood and

training projects to improve the financial situation of local people. This has included the establishment of the 'Leave No One Behind' micro financing program through the creation of small village savings and loans collectives.



New Integral Ecology Framework Launched

During the Season of Creation and the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, our Institute has recently launched a new integral ecology framework to guide our work in this field for the coming years. Entitled **"A place to call home"**, the cover image emerged at the last Chapter, where sisters were invited to reflect on ways of being and taking action together in new ways for these times.

Key themes from the framework include:

Integral Ecology is the contemporary expression of our Mercy and Faith Tradition (not an optional extra)

Integral Ecology means the interconnection of natural systems, human systems and spirituality

Creation is sacred and reveals the divine mystery to us

Paying attention to creation motivates us to live the 8th Work of Mercy "to care for our common home"

We are drawn into communion, a relationship with people, all of creation and divine mystery as it unfolds, **regardless of the outcome.**

This new document is called a 'framework' because it invites us all to consider many broad questions we are asking at this time, rather than declaring certain, clear actions in a time when so much changes and complexifies so rapidly.

What can I do?

Practical actions are clearly necessary and each place with its unique conditions will have different needs. Some ideas include:

Using as little energy as possible e.g. by insulating well, putting on double-glazed windows and sealing all gaps around doors and windows

Taking a meat free day per week (or more often)

Growing at least some of your own food to reduce supply chain issues and ensure local needs, either at home or in a community garden

Learn what species are under threat near you and what plants you can grow to encourage them

Provide multiple water spots for birds and reptiles in the backyard

Joining community groups restoring a local water way or bushland – Landcare, council tree plant-

ings, clean up events

Consider what public spaces could be improved for habitat, such as parish grounds

Becoming familiar with local conditions that may change in the future due to more intense storms, drought or fire - have a plan for yourself and an awareness of neighbours who may need support in emergencies.

Sally Neaves, Integral Ecology Officer

Messenger

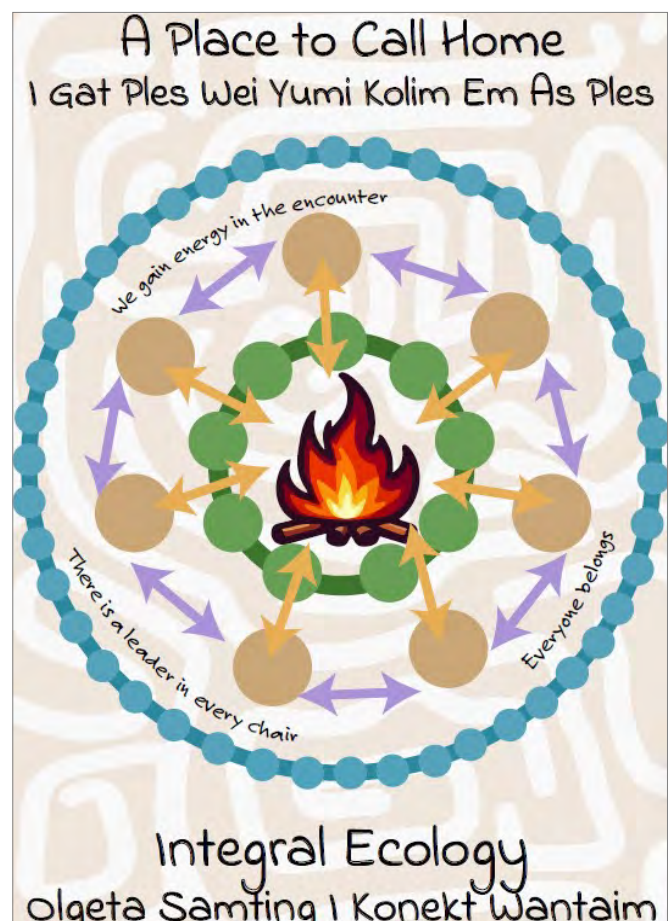
My work is loving the world...

Let me keep my mind on what matters,

Which is my work,

Which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.

Mary Oliver



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)



When's your birthday?

A reminder that **Les Stewart**, from the Ballarat Mercy Associates, prepares a prayer resource each month on which he lists the Mercy Associates who will celebrate their birthday during that month. This is a fabulous initiative by Les, and you are invited to email him at lescres1234@outlook.com.

Les only includes the date of your birthday—not the year!!! We are then able to include Mercy Associates celebrating their birthdays in our personal prayer intentions each month.



Network Facilitator contact details

NSW: **Phil Billington**
mercyassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au
Phone: 0428 593191

VIC & SA: **Anna McGookin**
mercyassociatesvic@ismapng.org.au
Phone: 0411 462485

QLD: **Marg Trevethan**
mercyassociatesqld@ismapng.org.ua
Phone: 0419 677469

WA, PNG & other locations: **Carmel Ross**
mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au
Phone: 0408 124404

Enriching Icon presentation for Adelaide Associates

The Adelaide Mercy Associates group had been considering having guest speakers at some of its meetings and inviting other people to attend. The guest speaker who spontaneously accepted the first invitation was Cynthia Griffin RSM who was asked to speak on a topic other groups have enjoyed with her, "Praying with Icons". The event was publicised through the Parish and those who came thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and the opportunity to meet the Associates and hear about the purpose and function of the group.

We asked Cynthia to write about her presentation and she obliged with:

"It was a great pleasure for me to join our Mercy Associates, together with a number of women who were attracted to this presentation called 'Praying with Icons'. I had invited those attending to bring their own Icons with them and together with those of mine, we had a beautiful and colourful display for our sharing and reflection.

With the aid of a Power Point featuring aspects of our Mercy visit to Russia in 2018 (thanks to Margaret Broadbent RSM), I began with a brief introduction of the Icon's history and their development and central importance in the faith and liturgy of



Cynthia Griffin with (L-R) Anne Roberts, Emmy Smyk, Mary Mutlow RSM, Mandy Bosson, Marie Ralph RSM and Liz Storoschuk

the Eastern

and Russian Orthodox traditions. The focus was on their writing, their theology in colour and their reading as a deep source of spirituality and prayer.

There were many questions from this engaged group of women and they were pleased to have a helpful handout to encourage and support their future 'Praying with Icons'".

Those of us who brought our Icons to the session were delighted to learn so much more about them. Thanks to Cynthia, we feel a greater depth, a deeper inspiration to pray with our icons. In the photo showing the icons, the one of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was painted for me by Margaret Broadbent. It enriches me daily.

The trip to Russia, that Cynthia referred to above, was organised by Margaret Broadbent RSM and Natalia Pecherskaya from St Petersburg. Through her friendship with Margaret over many years, her trips to Australia, and the trip to Russia of a group of our Sisters,

*Jenny O'Brien thanking Cynthia for her beautiful and enlightening presentation.
Absent on the day: Catherine Seward RSM*



Natalia became acquainted with many of our Australian Sisters of Mercy and expressed a longing to belong to a group of people who shared the charism of Mercy. Supported by Anne Pate, Network Facilitator of Mercy Associates in Victoria (at that time), Natalia participated in a formation program to become a Mercy Associate. There was just one other participant in the Zoom meetings which spanned a year - Mandy Bosson of Adelaide! The Circle of Mercy!

Marie Ralph RSM

Mercy Associate living the charism of Mercy

One of the ways in which I am able to contribute as a Mercy Associate is as a teacher in a wonderful program that sees indigenous religious sisters in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands study theology and liturgy as part of their ongoing formation.

This initiative began about 8 years ago and since then I have made four trips to work with sisters from around 15 different congregations in the area of Liturgy. The first three (to Mt Hagen, Wewak and Honiara) were made together with Sr Ilsa Neicinieks, a Mercy sister from Adelaide, and the most recent (to Port Moresby) I made on my own.

It is so gratifying to be able to share with these sisters who work at the grass roots level in villages, parishes, schools and dioceses. Their lives are very spartan and their commitment to their ministries enormous. Many of them work under extremely challenging circumstances – both physically and mentally – as large areas of PNG are still very difficult to access and the huge variety of languages and cultures in that country call for much patience, understanding and respect.

Our aim is to enable the sisters to gain, first of all, their Diploma in Pastoral Ministry, and then move on to the Advanced Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Ministry. The final goal is that the local sisters themselves will become the teachers within the program.

Jenny O'Brien, Adelaide



Jenny is standing in the centre of the back row with program participants

