

International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 each year, with the very first IWD held in 1911.

Marked by millions of people, IWD celebrates the achievements of women.

Create your sacred prayer space using IWD colours—purple, green and white.

Purple signifies justice, dignity and loyalty. Green symbolizes hope. White a symbol of solidarity.



Signs of Hope: Women's Wisdom and Friendship

Gathering Rite: *Begin your prayer time by sharing the following reading using four voices.*

FINDING WISDOM — Rosemary C. Mitchell

Reader 1: Who is wise and understanding?

Reader 2: Where does wisdom come from? How can I find it?

Reader 3: Wisdom is knowing that you don't know.

Reader 4: Wisdom comes with age.

Reader 2: With age? Are you kidding? Do we know the same people?

Reader 3: It's the children who are wise, all-trusting, no inhibitions, no prejudices.

Reader 2: But what about being naive and childish? That's not being wise!

Reader 1: At every age we can learn from experience. We cannot connect wisdom with age.

Reader 2: Yep, I know — Ya can't tell 'em a thing — They have to experience it for themselves.

Reader 1: It's when you begin to listen to that "inner voice" - that is the beginning of wisdom.

Reader 4: Trusting the spirit!

Reader 2: Being open to God!

Reader 3: Understanding paradox!

Reader 1: Living with the tension of the "Already-not-yet!"

Reader 2: It's having more questions than answers!

Reader 3: Wisdom is knowing that all of life teaches us.

Reader 4: Wisdom is realizing that we never stop learning.

Gathering conversation: *(share with one or two others if the group is large)*

How do you describe a wise person? *Is there something that Catherine McAuley said or did that you consider wise?*



Scripture: *"The wisdom of God" is often personified as "Sophia," the Greek word for wisdom*

A Reading from the BOOK OF WISDOM (7:23-26)

There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.

For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.

For she is a breath of the power of God,
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

For she is a reflection of eternal light,
a spotless mirror of the working of God,
and an image of goodness.

Reflect: *Has there been a difficult thing in your life through which you have been led to wisdom and hope?*

A Sign of Hope: Friendship

Reflection: from <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-envoy-of-sophia-2022-03-15/>

Wisdom at work in partnership and mutuality.

Fr Richard Rohr writes of the connection that theologian Elizabeth Johnson makes between Jesus' Sophia-inspired teaching and the many women who were empowered by his ministry:

Women interact with Jesus in mutual respect, support, comfort, and challenge, themselves being empowered to acts of compassion, thanksgiving, and boldness by Spirit-Sophia who draws near in him. . . . [These women] befriend, economically support, advise, and challenge Jesus, break bread with him and evangelize in his name. Others receive the gift of his healing, being empowered to stand up straight beyond physical or mental suffering, spiritual alienation, or social ostracism. . . . New possibilities of relationships patterned according to the mutual services of friendship .. flower among the women and men who respond and join his circle. They form a community of the discipleship of equals.

Our call as Mercy Associates is to live and share the compassion of God. We are women and men inspired by the life of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture and the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley. We form faith communities in which to nurture and live out together the charism and mission of mercy. We are friends in the work of mercy.

Catherine once said of friendship: **"It will be a source of great happiness – for which I thank God – a pure heartfelt friendship which renews the powers of mind and body".**¹² She considered life to be inconceivable and intolerable without friends. She believed in friendship as the Spirit's way of illuminating our lives, of affirming and consoling us and of reassuring us of the future to which we all are destined.

Mary Reynolds rsm at <https://www.mercyworld.org/library/affectionately-yours139/>

Jesus said: 'I call you friends ... You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit.' John 15:15-16

Let us pray with gratitude for the increase of the blessing of friendship among us:

Beatitudes for Today

Blessed is the person of faith and hope
They will be a sign of the presence of God among us.

Blessed is the person of relationships
They will be a bond of unity and sign of the fullness of God.

Blessed is the person who welcomes
They will be kindness, the sign of the love of the Lord.

Blessed is the person of the Word
They will be a Word of God for others.

Blessed is the person of discernment
The wisdom of God will be their riches.

Blessed is the person of peace and reconciliation
The strength and joy of the Lord will be theirs.

Blessed is the person who journeys toward the fullness of Christ
They will live in the freedom and light of the Lord.

Blessed is the person of prayer
They will live in communion with God, their brothers and sisters and all creation.

Amen

Sign of Peace: *Let's offer each other a sign of friendship and peace.*



"Perfection does not consist in doing extraordinary actions, but in performing extraordinarily well the ordinary actions of everyday."

Catherine McAuley
Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy

Closing Blessing: John O'Donahue

May the light of your soul guide you.
May you listen to your longing to be free.
May you be given soul wisdom for life and living.
May you heal what has hurt you and encounter the
light and beauty that is within you.
May there be kindness in your gaze.
May you arise each day with a voice of blessing
whispering in your heart that something good is
going to happen to you.
And, may you allow the wild beauty of the
eternal to gather you, mind you, and embrace you
in peace. Amen