

From the Heart of God

In this next stage of our *Living Mercy Purposefully* journey, Sister Liz Dowling and Sally Neaves invite us to reflect on the source of mercy and the ways it is revealed in Scripture, creation and our daily lives.

Liz begins with an image created by Anne McMillan RSM RIP, in which many different strands are woven together. Each of us is one of those strands, connected to the Mercy tradition begun by Catherine McAuley. Yet mercy did not begin with Catherine or with us, for God is the source from whom every expression of mercy flows.

Catherine captured this when she wrote: *We should be as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre.*

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God is described as *merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*. The Hebrew word *rahamim*, often translated as mercy or compassion, is closely connected to the Hebrew word for womb. It offers a powerful image of God's mercy as nurturing, protective and life-giving.

The Psalms remind us that this mercy embraces the whole Earth community. In the Gospels, God's mercy is revealed most fully in Jesus, who brings light to those in darkness and guides our feet into the way of peace.

Catherine believed that the life and teachings of Jesus should be *as a book always opened before us*. For her, it was not enough for Jesus to be formed within us; he must be recognised in our conduct.

This conviction shaped Catherine's understanding of Mercy. In the first chapter she added to the original Rule of the Sisters of Mercy, that Mercy is the *principal path marked out by Jesus Christ for those who desire to follow Him*. For Catherine, living Mercy begins by following the example of Jesus and ensuring his life is reflected in our own.

Mercy must become visible through our actions. This is reflected in the Beatitude: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.*

The original Greek can be understood as: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be mercied*. To be *mercied* means more than receiving mercy. It suggests being shaped and transformed by mercy. As we give and receive mercy, we become more merciful.

As we receive God's mercy and extend it to others, we are invited to enter what Liz describes as a *dance of mercy*, living each day in right relationship with all of creation and to follow Catherine's call to *dance every evening*.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be mercied.



A Place of Mercy

Sally Neaves (pictured below) invites us to discover that the natural world is more than something we admire, for it is a living teacher that reveals the mercy of God and shows us how to live in right relationship with one another and all creation.

Trees do not grow in isolation. Beneath the soil, their roots are connected by vast underground networks of fungi known as mycelium. These tiny white threads link trees into a living community, enabling them to share water and nutrients. They can even communicate warnings about drought, disease and insect attack. Older, established trees support younger saplings, helping the whole bushland to grow stronger. Rather than competing alone, the forest flourishes through cooperation and mutual care.

This interconnectedness is a powerful image of Mercy, for it is not simply an individual action; it is a way of living that nurtures relationships and enables life to flourish. In this way, Sally's reflection echoes the Eighth Work of Mercy, *Care for Our Common Home*, reminding us that caring for creation is both an expression of God's mercy and a response to it.

Sally also reminds us that Mercy is not only something we give, it is something we also receive.

It can deepen our sense of belonging and remind us that God's mercy is woven throughout creation.

Is there a place that holds special meaning for you, whether you can visit it today or simply return to it in your memories or dreams? What was it about that place, the people, the natural surroundings or your encounter that revealed God's mercy to you?

Whether experienced in the present or recalled with gratitude, these moments can continue to nourish our hearts and remind us that we remain connected to one another, to creation and to God. As we reflect on the wisdom of all of creation, we discover that mercy is found in sharing, supporting one another and recognising that all life is connected.

As Pope Francis reminded us in *Laudato Si* (220):

We are not disconnected from the rest of creation, but joined in a splendid universal communion.

What's coming up 1 August - 30 August

This month you are invited to:

- ✓ View the video ([click here](#)). It can also be watched on the ISMAPNG Youtube channel
- ✓ At the end of each day reflect on the three questions from **Our Daily Mercy Examen**
- ✓ Get together with others for a **Kitchen Table Conversation** in your local community or join us on Zoom on **Thursday, 13 August at 3.30pm AEST**
- ✓ Share your thoughts and reflections by emailing communication@ismapng.org.

