Living Mercy Purposefully

A Culture of Encounter

How can we live Mercy purposefully in a world increasingly marked by fragmentation and division?

This month's reflection invites us to consider this question by deepening and evolving our culture of encounter within our Institute and wider Mercy family.

The Mercy charism entrusted to us by Catherine McAuley is more than a legacy to preserve; it is a way of living and seeing the world. Each generation is invited to contribute to and enrich this legacy, responding to the needs of our time.

Since Pentecost, we have been invited to pause, listen to one another and reflect on what it means to live Mercy purposefully in this changing era.

In the next stage of *Living Mercy Purposefully*, we are invited to deepen and evolve a culture of encounter as a response to the fragmentation and division within society. As Pope Francis and Pope Leo have recognised, building such a culture requires us to stop, draw near and listen to one another's stories, as well as the stories unfolding in our world. It also requires a willingness to be changed by what we hear.







There are three essential elements that have been identified within our culture of encounter:

To live Mercy purposefully *together*
The first is an invitation to live Mercy purposefully together, with an emphasis on *together.*

In Australian First Nations cultures and in Papua New Guinea, the campfire is a place of hospitality and connection, where wisdom is shared across generations and people listen and learn. We are invited to continue gathering around the Mercy campfire: welcoming others, sharing our stories, listening deeply and discovering together where Mercy is calling us today.

Such encounters remind us that we are part of an interconnected community, dependent on one another and the whole of creation. Inspired by the Institute's *Integral Ecology Framework*, we are called to nurture relationships, communities and ways of living in which all can flourish.

To share Mercy in whatever ways we can
The second element recognises that, although our gifts, circumstances and seasons of life differ, we are united in our call to bring Mercy to the world.

Catherine McAuley wrote that Mercy is *the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following him*. Her witness, together with the teachings of Jesus, calls us to remain attentive to all instances of poverty, injustice and exclusion.

Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew remind us: *Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, my sisters and brothers, you did it to me.* Our Mercy Constitutions express this commitment in the words, *justice is mercy in action.*

Mercy can take many forms. It may mean speaking out against injustice and standing alongside those whose voices are not heard. It can also be found in the quiet, everyday gestures through which we care for one another: a listening ear, an encouraging word, an act of kindness, a prayer or simply being present. It is also found in the daily choices we make to care for our common home.

To read the signs of the times
The third element calls us to discern where the Spirit is leading us and to remain open to the new life that is emerging. Reading the signs of the times asks us to notice where God is calling us to respond and to have the courage to let go of what no longer serves us, making room for something new to flourish.

Pope Leo has described the possibilities before us as *seeds of peace and hope*. These seeds may take time to bear fruit. Our task is to nurture the seeds entrusted to us so that they continue to find new expressions in response to the needs of the world.

As our Institute looks towards our next Chapter, our culture of encounter invites us to approach our discernment and action with a continued openness, hope and a willingness to listen to the voices and experiences of others.



1 November - 30 November

This month you are invited to:

- ✓ **Watch the video - click here**
- ✓ **Obtain the *A Culture of Encounter* card from your community (or click here) and incorporate it into your Mercy Daily Examen**
- ✓ **Get together with others for a Kitchen Table Conversation in your local community or join the Zoom on Thursday, 12 November at 3.30pm AEDT**
- ✓ **Attend the Zoom session on Tuesday, 17 November at 3pm AEDT with Rev Prof Elizabeth MacKinlay, *Living Mercy Purposefully: Attending to the spiritual journey at each stage of our lives* - click here**
- ✓ **Review the previous month's materials - click here.**