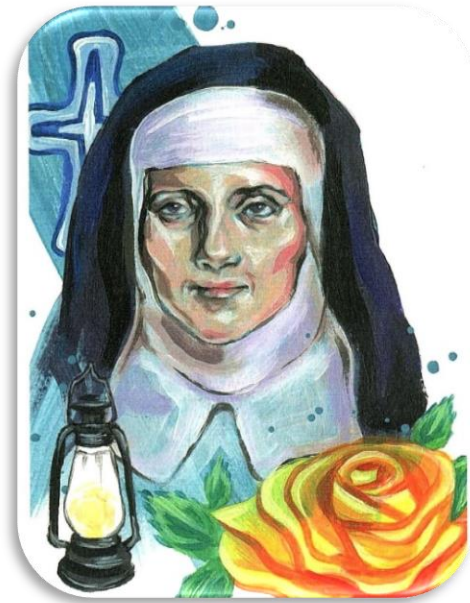




The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland

Mercy Associates

Image of Catherine McAuley from Book Two – “Be as Shining
Lamps” by Caroline Thompson



Chapter 5: The Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland

5.1 Arrival in Newfoundland

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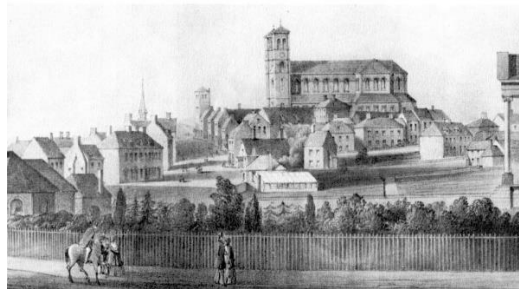
5.1 Arrival in Newfoundland

The story of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland began when Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming traveled to Dublin, Ireland where he approached Catherine McAuley to request a community of Sisters of Mercy for his island mission.

Sowing the Seed

To facilitate his plan, the bishop agreed to send to the convent on Baggot Street a young lady to be trained as a Sister of Mercy so that she could return to Newfoundland and found a Convent of Mercy in St. John's. The bishop's choice for this important role was Marianne Creedon, a young Irish lady who had lived in St. John's since 1833 and who was familiar with the needs of the mission. Catherine McAuley received Marianne Creedon into the novitiate at Baggot Street, and on August 19, 1841, Marianne, now Sister Mary Francis, was professed as a Sister of Mercy. Nine months later, on May 2, 1842, Sister Francis Creedon, accompanied by Sisters Ursula Frayne and Rose Lynch left House of Mercy, Baggot Street, and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to form the first community of the Sisters of Mercy in the New World. They arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland on June 3, 1842. This date marks the establishment of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland.

During the first eleven months of the new mission, the Sisters of Mercy visited the sick and the poor in their homes. On December 12, 1842, the Sisters moved from their temporary home, the bishop's residence, to their new convent on Military Road. This was the first Mercy Convent in the New World. On May 1, 1843, Our Lady of Mercy School, Military Road, was formally opened. The convent was located just below the Basilica of St. John the Baptist according to specifications as described by Bishop Fleming.



First Sister of Mercy Professed in the New World

Shortly after the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland, Maria Nugent, a native of Waterford, Ireland, joined the community. A few months after her arrival in Newfoundland in 1833 Maria had entered the Presentation Convent but withdrew two years later because of

illness. While with the Presentation Sisters, Maria had completed all the conditions of a canonical novitiate. Therefore, it was decided that a second novitiate with the Sisters of Mercy was not required and Maria Nugent, now Sister Mary Joseph, was professed as a Sister of Mercy on March 25, 1843.

Unless the Seed Dies . . .

On November 18, 1843, Sisters Ursula Frayne and Rose Lynch returned to Ireland, and for the next four years Sisters Francis Creedon and Joseph Nugent divided their time between teaching in the school and visiting the poor and the sick in their homes and in hospital. On June 17, 1847 Sister Joseph Nugent died of typhus contracted during her nursing duties at St. John's Hospital. Sister Francis was left alone and it is due to her fidelity, dedication and perseverance that the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy survived and flourished in Newfoundland. In April 1848, Sister Francis welcomed her niece, Agnes Nugent, as a postulant at Mercy Convent. In



1850 Sister Francis had the joy of receiving two more Irish ladies into the community. On July 2, 1855 the first Newfoundlander, Anastasia Tarahan, was received as a novice at Mercy Convent. Thirteen days later, on July 15, 1855, the gentle, courageous foundress of the Newfoundland Sisters of Mercy, Sister Francis Creedon, died. She was succeeded by Sister Francis Xavier Bernard who, before her death in 1882, saw forty young women professed as Sisters of Mercy, fifteen of whom were Newfoundlanders.

5.2 Expansion of Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland

Expansion

The increasing number of Sisters encouraged Sister Xavier Bernard to expand into new foundations.

In 1854 Sister Francis Creedon had opened the Immaculate Conception Orphanage at Mercy Convent. This building soon became inadequate. In 1859 Sister Xavier Bernard established St. Michael's Convent and Orphanage at Belvedere, a property in St. John's that had been bequeathed to the Sisters of Mercy by Bishop Fleming for that purpose. In 1861 Sister Xavier renovated the former orphanage at Mercy Convent for use as a boarding school for girls, named St. Clair's Boarding School. Two years later she opened St. Bridget's School in the East End of St. John's for the instruction of poor children. Before her death in 1882, Sister Xavier had established foundations in Brigus, Burin, Petty Harbour, St. Lawrence and Conception Harbour.

In 1884 St. Bride's Academy opened at Litledale, St. John's, as a boarding school for young women. In 1895 St. Bride's became recognized as a training school for Catholic female teachers and for the next eighty years it played a key role in the education of Newfoundland youth.

Rooting of Mercy on the West Coast of Newfoundland

The first foundation of the Sisters of Mercy on Newfoundland's West Coast was at Sandy Point in 1893. It came about as a result of a dream of a wealthy American convert to Catholicism, Mrs. Henrietta Brownell. Mrs. Brownell provided the financial means for four Sisters from a Mercy Convent in Providence, Rhode Island to establish a mission in what was then a remote part of the island of Newfoundland. This was the beginning of the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy in what became the Diocese of St. George's.



Amalgamation of Mercy Convents

In 1916 there were nine convents of Mercy in Newfoundland, each house being independent. Archbishop E. P. Roche initiated the move towards amalgamation. On July 1, 1916, the people of Newfoundland were notified that all convents of the Sisters of Mercy would be united under a central administration. Sister Bridget O'Connor became the first Mother General of the Sisters of Mercy, with the administrative offices located at the Motherhouse, Mercy Convent, Military Road, St. John's. St. Bride's, Litledale, was designated as the central novitiate. By 1927 six new Mercy convents had been founded in Newfoundland and the growing congregation had over one hundred and twenty sisters.

Evolving Ministries

For the most part, Sisters of Mercy served as principals and teachers in many parts of the island of Newfoundland. In addition to their school responsibilities they lived a vibrant community life and continued to visit the sick and infirm in their homes or in other facilities.

In 1922, in response to a long-felt need for a Catholic Hospital in St. John's, St. Clare's Mercy Hospital came into being under the administration of the Sisters of Mercy. In 1958, the Sisters of Mercy entered into a new phase of ministry when they agreed to administer and operate the newly-constructed St. Patrick's Mercy Home for the Aged and Infirm, located in the centre of St. John's.

New Shoots

In 1961 the boundaries of Mercy were pushed beyond Newfoundland with the establishment of a mission in Monsefú, Peru. In 1988 the seat of the Peruvian mission was transferred from Monsefú, to the near-by town of Puerto Eten and in 1993 a second mission was opened in Ichocan, Cajamarca. The 1980's and '90's saw the spread of the Sisters of Mercy to Labrador. In

1984 a mission was opened in the small island community of Black Tickle and shortly afterwards the Sisters of Mercy filled various ministries in other parts of Labrador.

With changing times new needs emerged. Sisters of Mercy responded in diverse forms of ministry, pastoral care of the sick, social work, ministering in correctional institutions, counselling, parish and diocesan ministry, youth ministry, spiritual direction, retreats, ministering to persons living with HIV and AIDS, promoting social justice issues and ecological awareness.

In 1993 the first group of Mercy Associates was formed. In the following years the numbers continued to increase so that by the year 2017 there are more than one hundred Mercy Associates throughout the province.

Today and Beyond

Today, women shaped and inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley carry out Mercy ministry in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Peru in a variety of ways.

Sisters minister not only in urban areas but also in many rural communities of our province and in Peru; one sister lives in Ontario.

The Congregation has established a Centre for Ecology and Justice which promotes and raises awareness as well as calls to action in areas related to the ecological and justice issues that concern our twenty-first century world at home and abroad.

Together Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland make a commitment to alleviate injustice and to continue to reach out in compassion and service to the poor and oppressed, especially to women. We seek to do this through our continued presence to the sick, elderly, poor, prisoners and the marginalized. Our Congregation also ministers through our sponsorship and contributions to numerous programs and projects, not only in our province and in Peru but also in the wider global community.

5.3 Chapter Statement

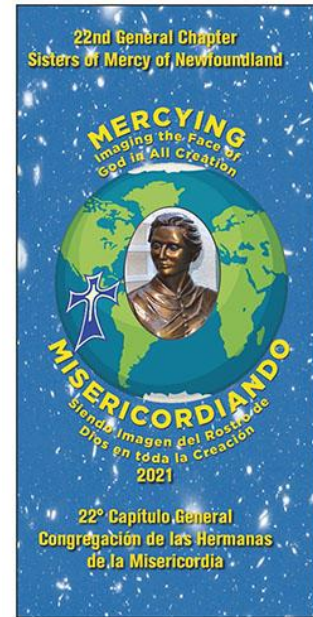
CHAPTER STATEMENT (2021)

Mercying: Imaging the Face of God in All creation, the call of the 22nd General Chapter (2021), impels us to a contemplative and intentional response to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor as one.

Trusting in God's providence and inspired by Catherine's vision, we dare to walk together into the future, exploring anew our place in an evolving universe.

We commit ourselves, through contemplative and compassionate presence, to:

- Listening and responding to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor as one;
- Welcoming diversity and inclusion in creation, and in community and ministry;
- Discerning new paths for leadership and ministry.



LA DECLARACIÓN DEL CAPITULO (2021)

Misericordiando: Siendo Imagen del Rostro de Dios en Toda la Creación, el llamado del Capítulo General vigésimo segundo (2021), nos impulsa a dar una respuesta contemplativa y decisiva al clamor de la Tierra y al clamor de los pobres que es un solo clamor.

Catalina, nos atrevemos a caminar juntos(as) hacia el futuro, explorando de nuevo nuestro lugar en un universo en evolución.

Como una presencia contemplativa y compasiva, nos comprometemos a:

- Escuchar y responder al clamor de la Tierra y al clamor de los pobres como uno solo;
- Acoger la diversidad y la inclusión en la creación, y en la comunidad y el ministerio;
- Discernir nuevos caminos para el liderazgo y el ministerio.

5.4 Significant Events

Significant Events in Our Mercy Story

- 1842:** Arrival from Ireland of first Sisters of Mercy in St. John's (Sisters [Francis Creedon, rsm,](#)
[Ursula Frayne, Rose Lynch](#))
- 1847:** Death of Sister Joseph Nugent
- 1855:** Death of Foundress, Sister Mary Francis Creedon
- 1855:** First Newfoundlander, Anastasia Tarrahan, entered the order
- 1859:** Foundation of St. Michael's Convent and Orphanage
- 1861:** Foundation of St. Joseph's Convent, Brigus
- 1863:** Foundation of St. Ann's Convent, Burin
- 1866:** Foundation at Petty Harbour
- 1869:** Foundation of Immaculate Conception Convent, Conception Harbour
- 1871:** Foundation of Sacred Heart Convent, St. Lawrence
- 1884:** Opening of St. Bride's College and Convent
- 1893:** Foundation on Sandy Point from Rhode Island
- 1913:** Opening of St. Clare's Home for Working Girls
- 1916:** Amalgamation of nine Convents of Mercy in Newfoundland into one congregation
- 1917:** Foundation of St. Edward's Convent, Bell Island
- 1917:** Foundation of St. Mary's on the Humber Convent in Curling
- 1921:** Foundation of Sacred Heart Convent, Bay Bulls
- 1922:** Foundation of St. Joseph's Convent, Signal Hill
- 1922:** Opening of [St. Clare's Mercy Hospital](#) and Convent
- 1927:** Foundation of Immaculate Conception Convent, Bell Island
- 1927:** Foundation of Holy Name of Mary Convent, Marystown
- 1939:** Opening of St. Clare's School of Nursing
- 1944:** Foundation of St. Teresa's Convent, Mundy Pond
- 1949:** Foundation of Sacred Heart Convent, Goulds
- 1950:** Foundation of Convent of the Assumption, Stephenville Crossing
- 1958:** Opening of Holy Heart of Mary High School – joint ministry with Presentation Sisters
- 1958:** Opening of [St. Patrick's Mercy Home](#) and Convent
- 1959:** Foundation of St. John Eudes Convent, Beaconsfield
- 1960:** Opening of St. Catherine's Convent and McAuley Hall
- 1961:** Opening of Mission in [Monsefu, Peru](#)
- 1962:** Foundation of Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, North River
- 1967:** Foundation of Holy Trinity Convent, Upper Ferry
- 1968:** Foundation of St. Hugh's Convent, St. Fintan's
- 1971:** Opening of Convent in Rushoon

- 1984:** Opening of Convent in Black Tickle, Labrador
1991: Opening of [McAuley Convent](#) on Littledale site
1993: Establishment of the Mercy Associate Program
1994: Opening of [The Gathering Place](#) – joint ministry with Presentation Sisters
2020: Move to [The Residence at Littledale](#)