



# 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 7: Ministry – Sharing the Charism of Mercy**

### **7.1 Everyday Mercy**

### **7.2 Snapshots from Mercy Associates Groups**

### **7.3 Mission**

### **7.4 Ministry**

### **7.5 Social Action**

## 7.0 Ministry - Sharing the Charism of Mercy

As noted previously, the first House of Mercy, established on Baggot Street in the heart of Dublin's fashionable and wealthy district, had at its very heart a mission to serve the poor, address the causes of misery and support all people who struggle for full dignity. Sisters of Mercy today continue to read the signs of the times and to dedicate themselves to serving people who suffer from injustices. They animate others, including Mercy Associates, to journey with them – to partner them in this ministry.

### 7.1 Everyday Mercy

Sometimes we can think that sharing mercy means we must be looking for 'big' opportunities to do so, but the reality of life for Catherine McAuley and those who worked with her was that their day to day lives were flavoured through and through with small acts of mercy towards those they met. The following is an extract from an article by Vinita Hampton Wright, entitled 'What does everyday mercy look like?' (*National Catholic Reporter*, 26 August 2014). It provides a perspective on mercy that enables us to learn to see moments each and every day, where our choice about how to react to a challenging situation can be one of Mercy.

I would rather be cold and hungry than be poor in Kingston or elsewhere be deprived of any consolation in our power to afford.

Letter to Teresa White November 1, 1838

---

What does mercy look like? How might I become a person of mercy? In the Christian vocabulary, mercy is a forgiving response to wrongdoing; it is God's countermove to our sin. ...

As I move through this day, how will I live mercifully? What words and actions will express to others around me the mercy Pope Francis is talking about? In a given day, I do ordinary things, and I traverse a fairly unexciting landscape. My mercy will not show up in grand gestures, and most of the time mercy reveals itself in fleeting moments.

For example, mercy gives you his seat on the bus, acting as if he was about to get up anyway rather than making you feel that he is doing you a favour. Mercy does not let out that sigh -- you know the one -- the wordless disapproval toward the person in the check-out line ahead of you whose card didn't swipe, or who can't find her coupons, or whose toddler is having a meltdown. Mercy offers quiet sympathy and does not convey with her body language that this holdup is ruining her day. Sometimes mercy chooses not to send back the food that isn't just right, simply because the waitress looks overwhelmed.

When mercy has been wronged, the offended one does not make it difficult for the offender to apologize or ask forgiveness. In fact, mercy does not wait for the other's action but forgives so quickly that the person needing forgiveness is freer to ask for it. Likewise, at work, at

home or in the classroom, mercy creates an atmosphere in which a person feels safe enough to admit his mistake or ask a question. And if mercy must correct someone, it pains her to do it, and she does so gently, without vindictive relish.



Mercy makes a habit of giving others the benefit of the doubt. Mercy is not in the habit of sending deadly glares at people who are annoying. Mercy gives charitably, knowing that eventually someone will take advantage of his generosity. Mercy welcomes you, fully aware that this act may disrupt her own plans.

Mercy relinquishes control when doing so allows another person to grow and learn. Mercy makes it his business to help others succeed. Mercy clears the way for others, so that they can walk on an even path, no matter how halting their steps or injured their souls.

In all these situations, mercy treats power as a sacred trust. I can be merciful because I have some sort of power, the means to affect another's life, if only for a moment. I act mercifully when I use my power to do kindness in this world. ...

In my own work, I have achieved a certain level of expertise and others' respect. When I sit in a room with colleagues, they feel the weight of my opinions. With a sentence or a glance, I can crush or I can encourage. I can open up the conversation or shut it down.

Most of my sins involve failure at mercy. Whether through my unhelpful opinion of someone, my silent sentences that criticize him, my words grinding away in the privacy of a moving car, my neglect to help, or my refusal to notice when help is needed -- each failure of mercy denies the community a bit of healing that might have happened.

Thus, mercy has become my new sin detector, a personal barometer. 'Am I showing mercy?' makes for self-assessment that is simple, direct, and difficult to misinterpret.

“Mercy is more than Charity—for it not only bestows benefits, but it receives and pardons again and again—even the ungrateful.”

—Catherine McAuley

Sisters of Mercy  Hermanas de la Misericordia

---

*Our challenge throughout each day is to be mindful of moments when we can choose to share mercy with another. Think about some moments so far today where the chance to be merciful arose. What did you do? How can you work to bring mercy to the lives of others in your everyday life?*

---

## **7.2 Snapshots from Mercy Associates Groups**

Below are some examples of initiatives by Mercy Associates groups, past and present. They vary in their focus, and often a group will be involved in a few different initiatives – this is a great way to draw on the skills and interests of Mercy Associates and provide a chance for all to contribute their own gifts to the life of their group. Following these are some additional options for Mercy Associates groups to serve the needs of those in their communities and advance the spread of justice and mercy in our world.

Baie Verte Initiatives:

We are involved in community groups by volunteering to participate in:

- A. Peninsula Used Clothing Bank and Food Bank,
- B. School Breakfast Program,
- C. Senior's Social Group,
- D. Visits to Chronic Care, Retirement Home and sick and shut-ins,
- E. We participate in Ecumenical Services and offer to help plan these services when asked,
- F. Circle of Prayer - when people ask us to pray for their special intentions, such as for the sick.

We are also involved in parish work by volunteering in:

- A. Ministries - sacristans, readers, communion ministers, choir ministers, bringing communion to the sick, parish council members,
- B. Sacramental Preparation - Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation, RCIA,
- C. Funerals - Praying the Rosary, involved with the wake service and funeral mass/service. (Sometimes families ask an associate to help prepare the funeral

liturgy).

### 7.3 Mission

‘Mission’ comes from the Latin word meaning ‘to send’ and it implies that a person sent goes in service of others. Through our baptism we are invited each and every day to be missionary in the way we live. Jesus did not just proclaim God’s mission, his actions put him at the very centre of that mission. That centre was among the poor, the weak and the oppressed. Catherine’s mission was also counter-cultural and she, too, was often treated with contempt. Through her great love of God she believed she was called to continue Jesus’ work amongst the marginalised and most destitute people of her time.

#### Mission Statement

*We, the Sisters of Mercy, in response to our baptismal call and in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, participate in the mission of Jesus through prayer, community living and service.*

*We collaborate with other members of the Church to extend God’s reign of love, justice and peace. We do this through our ministry with the poor, sick, aged, uneducated and oppressed. By striving to make God’s mercy visible, we become signs of hope in the church and in the world.*

*We are called to a mission of mercy and justice in today’s world. We seek to live a spirituality flowing from a sense of sacredness of creation as expressed in reverence for ourselves, for one another and for all creation.*

#### Declaración de Misión

*Nosotras, las Hermanas de la Misericordia, en respuesta a nuestra llamada bautismal y en el espíritu de Catalina McAuley, participamos en la misión de Jesús a través de la oración, la vida comunitaria y el servicio.*

*Colaboramos con otros miembros de la Iglesia para extender el reino de Dios de amor, justicia y paz. Lo hacemos a través de nuestro ministerio con los pobres, enfermos, ancianos, sin educación y oprimidos. Al esforzarnos por hacer visible la misericordia de Dios, nos convertimos en signos de esperanza en la Iglesia y en el mundo.*

*Estamos llamados a una misión de misericordia y justicia en el mundo de hoy. Intentamos vivir una espiritualidad que brota del sentido de la sacralidad de la creación, expresada en la reverencia hacia nosotros mismos, hacia los demás y hacia toda la creación.*

*Traducción realizada con la versión gratuita del traductor [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator)*

## **7.4 Ministry**

Mission is expressed through ministry – what we do to bring about truth and justice in the world and to break through the boundaries of comfort, privilege and security. Christian ministry gives witness to the reign of God and must be a public activity carried out on behalf of the whole Christian community. There has to be a fit between what is said and what is done. In early nineteenth century Ireland, Catherine recognised the many needs of people and determined that she and women like her could make a difference. She had a particular ability to address immediate need in a practical and loving way. Today, we see the Sisters of Mercy and their ministry partners continuing to change people’s hearts and establish networks of support. Mercy Associates are invited to walk alongside them.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Mercy mission is exercised through a variety of ministries which include:

- the traditional works of teaching, visitation, care of the sick, assistance to disadvantaged and vulnerable people with particular concern for women and children in need by assisting at The Gathering Place, food bank (Emmaus House), hospital ministry at St. Clare’s, St. Patrick’s Mercy Home and Eastern Health
- care for the vulnerable earth community through the Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice
- work for justice through challenging oppressive relationships and structures, i.e., human trafficking and visitations to Her Majesty’s Penitentiary.

Mercy Associates have many different lifestyles, life experiences and responsibilities and, as such, live the Mercy charism in whatever way they can. Compassionate service can be given to family and friends, to work colleagues or within the broader community wherever they meet people in need. Many Mercy Associates are engaged in projects within their parish or in their own area. Such projects include supporting refugee families, helping out at The Gathering Place that serve the homeless and hungry, volunteering in schools or assisting migrants with English lessons. Some Mercy Associates are engaged in directly working with the Sisters in their many different ministries. These may be assisting families, children, those with disabilities, women and

victims of domestic violence, accommodation and outreach to those who are homeless or elderly, visits to people at the Penitentiary, community development programmes, counselling and advocacy support. Great joy can be brought to Mercy Associates who support Mercy mission and ministries through prayer.

## **7.5 Social Action**

The Congregation has Sisters and agencies working in many areas where injustice and lack of opportunity are prevalent. Some of the Congregation's priorities include Women and Poverty, Trafficking in Humans, Eco-Justice, and Refugees. Mercy Associates are often able to add their voice to these initiatives by liaising with the local Sisters and seeking opportunities to contact local politicians, write letters to politicians and those in organisations where unjust treatment of staff and/or local residents has been proven, and where environmental damage is taking place.