

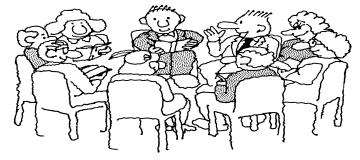
Mercy Associates was launched in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise on Saturday 17th Jan 1998

177 were present this included 28 interested

Sisters and their lay friends.



Present Reality



- 32 Sisters of Mercy acting as mentors (mostly working in pairs)
- 20 groups
- 178 members approx
- Mage profile of mentors and associates
- Just a couple of associates in their forties



Structure

Associates meet once a month with the exception of the summer months

Mentors' Meeting every September

Core Group meets once a term

Annual Gathering of Associates last Saturday of April

Renewal commitment for associates every September

Newsletter once a year.



Format of Meetings

- Prayer
- Some input on the life and spirituality of Catherine
- Some topic for discussion based on Chapter Statement or Congregational Ministries or local Mercy history
- Linking in with local Mercy Ministries and needs
- Linking in and supporting Mercy Missions



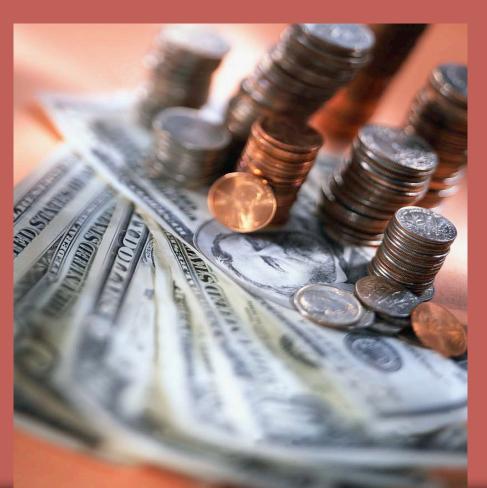
Educational Initiatives

- Sharing Hope and Imagination Process Dalgan May 2008, breaking open the Chapter Statement
- Makening the Dreamer Be the Change Symposium
- Mercy the Sympathy of God DVD by Deirdre Mullen
- Writing to Irish Prisoners overseas



Mercy Projects

- Fundraising initiatives for
- **M** Kenya
- South Africa
- **Brazil**





Young Mercy Friends

- This initiative was undertaken with 6th class pupils in the Primary Schools of Askea Carlow and Naas
- Piloted Programme in 2008
- Concerns around child protection
- New catechetical programme broad based and includes, new universe story, environmental issues etc.



Challenges

- Mean How to sustain enthusiasm
- Mark How to attract New Members
- Market How to attract a younger age group
- Meed for guidelines to be put in place
- Minimum number of meetings necessary for to maintain healthy life in the group
- The reality of ageing mentors and associates



Challenges

- How to address and meet the needs of groups at different levels e.g. new established groups as opposed to ones in existence for a few years.
- Mow to meet the need of a new member joining an established group
- How to get associates to take ownership for the life of the group, convening meetings, agenda etc.
- Some groups still very reliant on the Sister Mentor.
- More autonomy
- Difficulty of getting a good guest speaker for the Gathering Day and to come up with acceptable topics or theme for that day.

