

Foundation Day

12 December 2013



Mercy International Association

64a Lower Baggot Street, Dublin

<http://www.mercyworld.org>

Welcome: Mary Reynolds rsm
(Mercy International Association)

Presider: Conall O'Cuinn SJ

Opening Song: **Gather** by Liam Lawton (©1996)

1. Gather from the East, gather from the West,
Gather from the highways too.
Gather from the North, gather from the South,
Gather when the night is noon.

Ref: And we'll gather and we shall reap,
and no longer in sadness we'll weep.
And we'll gather, and we shall reap,
resting, rising, calling, guiding, O Lord.

2. Gather all the needy, gather all in pain
Gather all who cry in vain.
Gather all the thirsty, gather all the poor,
Gather all in Jesus' name. [R]

3. Gather all forgotten, gather all forlorn.
Gather all who weep and mourn.
Gather all the silent, gather all who sing,
Gather all the hearts reborn. [R]

Kyrie: by Seán Ó Riada

A Thiarna, déan trócaire
A Chríost, déan trócaire
A Thiarna, déan trócaire

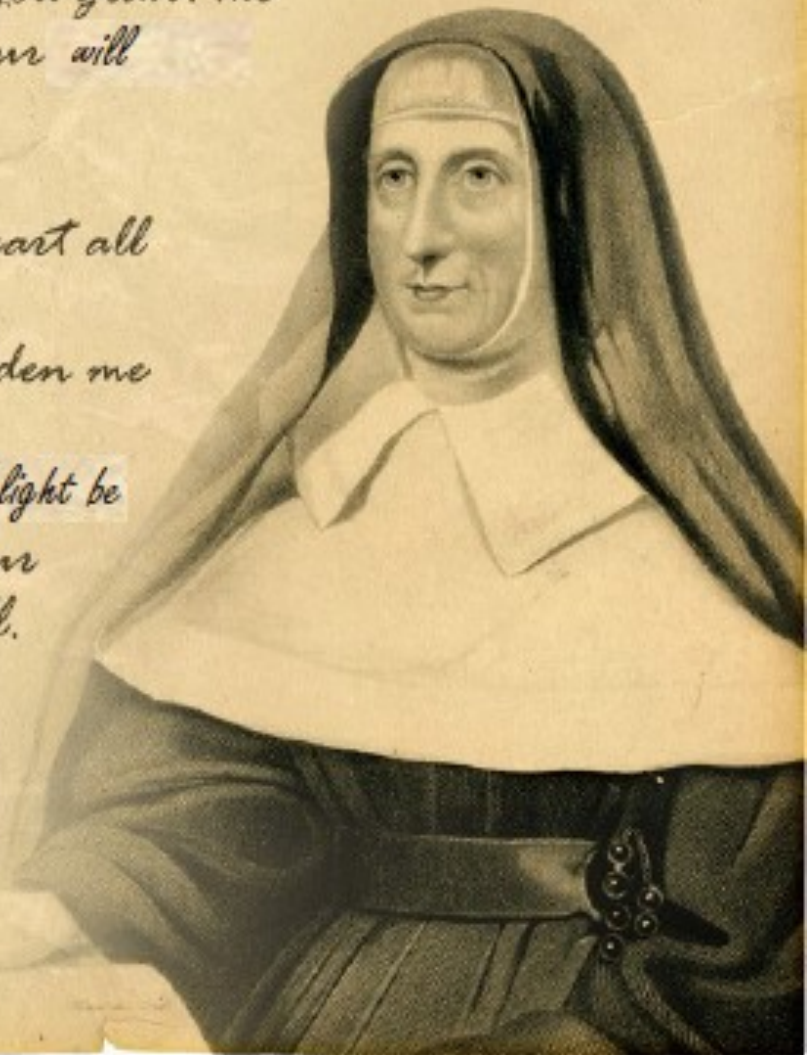
Communion: Suscipe of Catherine McAuley

by Elaine Deasy rsm (© 1994)

My God, I am yours for time and eternity,
Lord, I am yours forever.
It's you that must teach me to trust in your
Providence,
Loving Lord.

You are a God of love and tenderness.
I place my trust in you,
And I ask that you grant me
acceptance of your will
Loving, Lord.

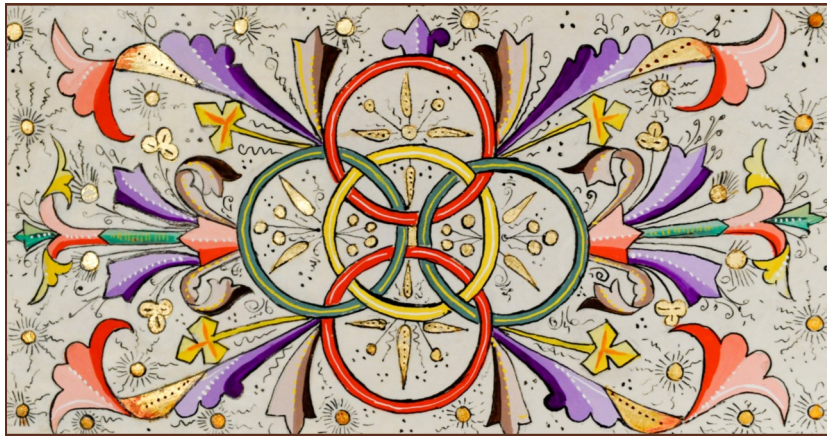
Take from my heart all
painful anxiety.
Let nothing sadden me
but sin.
And then let my delight be
hoping to see your
face, God, my all.



Prayers of the Faithful:

Response:

'Merciful God, Graciously Hear Us'



Offertory: Instrumental music

Sanctus: by Seoirse Bodley (©1981)

Memorial Acclamation: ***Save Us, Saviour of the World***
by Liam Lawton (©2010)

Save us, Saviour of the world.
Save us, Saviour of the world.
For by your Cross and Resurrection
You have set us free,
You have set us free.

Great Amen: by Seoirse Bodley (©1981)



First Reading: Isaiah 41:13-20

Responsorial Psalm:

Come O Lord by Roger Ruston

1. Promised Lord and Christ is he,
May we soon his kingdom see. [R]

Ref: Come, O Lord, quickly come.
Come in glory, come in glory,
Come in glory, quickly come.

2. Teaching, healing once was he,
May we soon his kingdom see. [R]

3. Soon to come again is he,
May we soon his kingdom see. [R]

Gospel Acclamation: by Seoirse Bodley (©1981)

Gospel: Matthew 11:11-15

Reflection: Anna Burke rsm
(Western Province, Congregation/Ireland)

Chapter 9
Of The Renewal of Vows

**Renewal of Vows
For Sisters of Mercy**

On the day of my Profession,
I committed myself to follow Christ
as a Sister of Mercy
to serve God's people.

Today,
in Catherine's chapel,
I

vow again
Poverty, Chastity, Obedience,
and the Service of the poor, sick
and uneducated
according to our Constitutions
and I promise to persevere
until death.

I invite you to pray for me
as I recommit myself
to this Mercy way of life
in the spirit of our founder,
Catherine,
and as a follower of Jesus.

Amen.

The
of their vows
of Their Heaven
have contracted

Form

omnipotent
in the presence
Profession, and
Obedience acc

of our Bless

I most earnestly supplicate Thy Divine goodness through the merits
of Jesus Christ to grant me grace to fulfill these obligations - Amen

we make a renewal
favours in the service
obligations, they

we

do ratify this day
which I made at my
Charity and
This Institute

lection,

Called to Mercy



**Renewal of Commitment
For Associates, Circle of Mercy members,
Partners in Ministry and Friends of Mercy**

God of Mercy,
as we gather here today in Catherine's Chapel,
I renew my commitment to live a life of love.

Inspired by Catherine McAuley,
I accept the challenge to live the Gospel of Jesus
and to be a person of Mercy
visible in the world today.

Open my eyes to see the suffering
in the poor, forgotten, and marginalized.
And I ask you, Catherine,
to walk this journey of faith with me. Amen.

Closing Song: *Christ Be Our Light*

by Bernadette Farrell (©1993)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness,
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

Ref: Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts,
 Shine through the darkness.
 Christ be our light!
 Shine in your church gathered today

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come [R]

A Special Thanks to the Musicians:

Eithne Doyle rsm (organist) (South Central Province)
Rosaleen Hogan rsm (singer) (South Central Province)

***You are invited to the dining room for lunch,
and a harpsichord concert at 2 p.m. in the Chapel.***

***Please also take time to visit the Icon Exhibition hosted
by the Association of Iconographers of Ireland and
held in the International Room (Level 1).***

Front Cover and Illuminations on pages 3 & 6:

Illustration by Sr. Clare Augustine Moore.

Photo by David Knight.

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Breaking Open The Word - Anna Burke rsm Foundation Day 2013

Isaiah, John and Catherine are with us today in the meeting place. And in an interesting and mysterious way Nelson Mandela is also very much in our awareness on Dec 12th, 2013

I had the privilege in recent years of visiting the home of Nelson Mandela in Soweto South Africa. My abiding memory of the little house, a “matchbox” was of the meeting of two worlds, the world of the statesman – walls covered with photographs of international trips, meetings with presidents, queens and kings and all in this poor and humble setting, a “matchbox.” Do we ever know what will come out of a stable, a matchbox? In recent days with the announcement of the death of Nelson Mandela I remembered Soweto and the little house, the international gathering. Nelson Mandela achieved international recognition, not because he had any claim to fame or wealth, but because he understood Mercy, to give like God, to forgive, like God....”

“You will achieve more in the world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”
(N. Mandela)

In his tribute to Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama said that Nelson Mandela now belongs to the ages. He belongs to the ages because Mercy, alone, is from age to age.

Today in the company of Isaiah, John the Baptist, Catherine McAuley and Nelson Mandela we pause to experience again the advent of Mercy, into time, into history, into Nazareth, into Bethlehem, into Baggot Street, into my heart and your heart.

Catherine McAuley in 1841 and Nelson Mandela in our time both understood Mercy as the agent of change in a society. When Catherine saw the light she embarked on a life-altering course for herself, for Ireland, for the whole world. With her sisters she moved to the edges where poverty gathers and tares apart. Catherine believed that Mercy was the catalyst for systemic change and like Mandela she became a great architect of forgiveness and reconciliation. Catherine lived at the centre where God sustained her and from her centre point she came to understand that Mercy is the shape of change, for a new world order, out of the harsh winds of condemnation. Mercy civilizes, restores, releases, reconciles.

All creation groans with an irresistible attraction to the mercy of God's being, the source of communion in the cosmos, the indelible covenant. Everything that lives, yearns to taste the mercy of God.

Someone will always rise up to speak of God's mercy. The prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, Catherine McAuley, Nelson Mandela rose up. They carried the energy of mercy by word of mouth, in symbolic action, across land and sea, down the canals and streets, through 27 years imprisonment. They carried God's mercy into the waiting places and the desert trembled with the breath of life. Catherine was prepared to sell Baggot Street itself to release the energy of God's mercy that there might be a chance at the margins. Mercy is an amazing grace:

But then once in a lifetime
The longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.
(Seamus Heaney)

A tidal wave of justice! From Bethlehem to the Jordan, from Baggot Street to Soweto justice and mercy are inseparable. Mercy has no definition apart from justice.

In the First Reading today Isaiah reminds us that the Advent of the Messiah heralds a new beginning for the poor: "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst, I their God will answer them, I will not forsake them." Advent is more about a world becoming aware of God's presence than it is of a baby in Bethlehem. Every Eucharist reminds us of this: Eucharist is what we become in Christ, a people of mercy, a people of justice, repairing the world. The child in the manger is the Christ of evolution, shaping, calling, attracting, restoring all people, all things, all creation. He has come to make all things new.

In Advent we have a heightened awareness that we are going home. It is the great hunger, just to see God. The going home theme dominates our conversation and we all ask "Are you going home for Christmas?" Isaiah narrates for us the great yearning for the homeland that the Hebrew people experienced as they wept by the rivers of Babylon. The going home theme is very movingly expressed by Nelson on his return to his home town of Soweto after his release from prison:

That night I returned with Winnie to no. 8115 in Orlando West, Soweto. It was only then that I knew in my heart I had left prison. For me no. 8115 was the centre point of my world, the place marked with an X on my mental geography." When he went home he knew he had left prison! Home is the place where someone is waiting for us, that place where we come in contact with an awareness of belonging to someone. As we meet on the road to Bethlehem this Christmas season the thirst intensifies; the whole world is going home.

Going home leads us out of the city, beyond the world of Caesar, to a new awakening, to a new way of seeing and hearing where, as Isaiah tells it, those who are parched with thirst find water and where each one of us, in the deserts of our own lives, discover the cedar, the olive, the cypress and touch again the face of God. Advent is about ending the exile, changing direction, returning to the ancient root.

Exile is a lonely place. Sorrow, distress, the rawness of physical and emotional pain can bring us face to face with exile, that empty feeling of being separated. Most exiles presume that God has forgotten them. Going home is the rediscovery that God never forgets us. Isaiah tells us "Do not be afraid", God will be there for you, for ever and for always". Just when the Hebrew people thought that all was lost, that exile would wipe them out, God was preparing a plan of recovery, a remarkable plan, something never written of, something never imagined in myth or reality: God was coming into our lives, turning the desert into a spring of water. Like the people of ancient Israel we all have a turning point. There comes a time to go home, to ourselves, to a neighbour, to a friend, to the family, to forgiveness, to God. Let us go home for Christmas.

Every season has its unique speed. The speed of Advent is waiting. Christmas happens for those who wait. We all know the experience of waiting, for a break in the cloud, for a footprint in the sand, for the sound of a human voice, for a loved one to return, for a place to call home. We know about waiting. History has shown us that the people most likely to survive tragedy, imprisonment, concentration camps are the people who have a reason to wait, someone is waiting for me. Substance abuse and all forms of self-destruction are so often rooted in loss expectation in life, nothing to wait for. The end of waiting is the end of the dream. Nelson Mandela waited for 27 years believing that the people who walked in darkness would see a great light.

We are in a line of people who waited in hope. Prophets teach us to wait. The whole of creation has set the speed of Advent for us and everywhere the stillness gathers to herald the waiting time. Isaiah calls out to us, in our time to leave Babylon and to return to the Source of light and life. The separation is over; we are going home.

We must not, we will not miss the moment when the night gives up its darkness and a star of wonder moves into history.

Someone is waiting for my return this Advent season.

Advent is the great breakthrough! Let anyone with ears listen! John the Baptist is pointing human history to the Christ! His words are clear; his vision is uncluttered: Behold the Lamb of God! No wonder the evangelist says that he is the greatest man born of woman. He directed all creation to the Kingdom of God.

It is really special for us to celebrate the Foundation of the Mercy Congregation in the company of Isaiah, John and Catherine and Nelson Mandela. They led the breakthrough and like Mary they recognised the signs of the time and they opened their hearts to speak the mercy of God into the world order. With them and through them and with millions of people like them we continue to proclaim the mercy of God, from age to age.

O Silent God you crept into this world without trumpet blast. This Advent time is shrouded in your silence. The mystery is everywhere, grey clouds against bare skies, the stillness of a million stars, waiting. It is Advent!

In this sacred space where earth and heaven meet we reach out again to touch the face of God. There is movement in the Advent night; the moon is keeping watch. Heaven is breaking through. We will follow the star to journey's end.

Let us go over to Bethlehem.