

## **A Sampling of Programme Participant Reflections Mercy International Centre # 1994-2014**

### **Beginnings and Endings Retreat - led by Patricia Ryan rsm - 1995:**

- 'A wonderful retreat, blessed in every way and just the right time for me.'
- 'Being here with Catherine was a privilege. We got to know her, not just about her.'
- 'The meals were so well prepared and truly a breaking and sharing of the bread with our Sisters from many parts of the world. I'm so happy we didn't choose to be by ourselves in silence.'
- 'The reflections gave me food for thought and were a great source of healing.'

### **Directed Retreat - 1995:**

- 'I appreciated the Mercy orientation, the international flavor and the women who directed.'

### **Spirituality Seminar - 1995:**

- 'I appreciated being at Baggot Street for the seminar given by such talented Mercy Sisters.'
- 'Trips to places of Catherine's Dublin were very helpful to get in touch with our roots.'
- 'The presence of sisters from different countries motivated me to read the histories of their particular foundations.'
- 'I appreciated the excellent lectures, the palpable presence of Catherine and the great variety of experiences shared.'

### **Staff Pilgrimage from St Teresa's Rest Home, Fishguard Wales - 1995:**

- 'It was an inspiration to see and walk about.'
- Excerpt from a poem: 'Since the eighteen-twenty's it has been kept alive; it's a privilege to have been there in the year of ninety-five.'

### **Private Reflection aided by a reflection guide - 1995:**

An option was advertised in 1995-1996 for sisters and associates wishing to spend quiet time at Baggot Street to come and stay. Pat Ryan rsm (Melbourne, Australia) spent three weeks in August/September 1995 and shared these reflections:

- 'On many occasions in my life at gatherings of our sisters, my heart has overflowed with joy and pride at the realisation that I belong to a wonderful group of merciful women. That feeling of overwhelming joy is so much stronger now that I have discovered and experienced the presence of Catherine and her companions at Baggot Street.... I'm going home with a heart full of joy and gratitude.'

### **Mercy Spirituality and the Vows - led by Janet Ruffing rsm and Celeste Marie Nuttman rsm - 1996:**

- 'I appreciated the reflection or emphasis on the importance of the vows in today's world (a rather neglected area in recent years).'
- 'Being here in this sacred place with daughters of Catherine from around the globe was the most awesome part of this experience.'
- 'There was a feeling of being "at home" in the comfortable and congenial atmosphere of the Centre.'
- 'I appreciated the diversity: input, conversation, quiet, art, the labyrinth.'

**Mercy Associates Weekend - 1998:**

- 'The retreat was very spiritual without being overly religious. The emotions that came into play were only the ones you brought with you, yet the review of the life of the Foundress released those emotions. Tears of joy and sorrow were shed amidst laughter; a true bonding of Mercy was felt by all.'
- 'By the end we all felt we had received a genuine feeling of renewal in Mercy, an expression of community and a greater awareness of the work that can be accomplished with God's grace and our time and prayers.'

**Come Back to Baggot Street - Day for Sisters of Mercy who previously lived in the Baggot Street Community - 2001:**

- 'Meeting again at Baggot Street.... The Oh's and Ah's, the hugs, the tears of joy; holding one another at arm's length to get a better look. And the gratitude to one another and to Baggot Street for holding the dream and to Catherine for building us such a true home. Gratitude also to all in MIC for the inspiration to bring us together to have the light of other days shine around us.'
- 'St Paul exhorts us "to practice hospitality". The Sisters in the International Centre have taken this to heart and Baggot Street has become a haven of hospitality for the multitude. We, the Sisters who lived there in the past, experienced this first hand at the re-union day in November 2001. We felt at home at once with the team. There was a great buzz of excitement and conversation in the refectory as old friend greeted each other over a welcome "cup of tea", renewed friendships and revived old memories....'
- 'A day to remember - that's what Sr Rosie Carroll gave to each of us when she invited us to Baggot Street to celebrate the 170th anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation. More than fifty of us availed ourselves of the chance to visit our hold home. We were from three or four generations and meeting one another was part of the thrill. So was the warm welcome we got from the Sisters now in Baggot Street.'

**Mercy Leadership Pilgrimage - for Sisters of Mercy and lay leaders of Mercy ministries in Australia and New Zealand - 2002:**

- 'Each day was better than the last!'

**Mercy Ethos Programme - for Sisters of Mercy and lay leaders of Mercy ministries in Australia and New Zealand - 2003:**

- 'During our Mercy Ethos Program 2003, Catherine McAuley became very tangible to us. Being able to stand outside the Mercy International Centre and realize that it was the building that Catherine planned and built was an awesome experience. Going from room to room inside made more real for us this woman who achieved so much. Sitting in her room with the original floorboards, prie dieu and crucifix enabled us to envisage her in a real and tangible way and called us to deepen our way of following her Mercy path.'

**Walking and Praying with Catherine - 2004:**

- 'I have met Catherine anew. I will be starting anew in my old, old age and I'll be dancing in my bedroom each evening until I breathe my last!' (91 year old Irish Sister of Mercy)

**Mercy Leadership Pilgrimage - 2004:**

- 'I have sometimes questioned within myself why the Sisters of Mercy appear to take such risks with their finances. This week I have come to know that Catherine was the great risk

taker and the Trustees with whom I work are simply living out of her legacy.... [Prior to this pilgrimage] I had been asked to find a way in which the Sisters could finance a clinic for asylum seekers and refugees at the hospital. I questioned the wisdom of such a request. I will be different when they next approach me.' (member of the finance department at a Mercy-owned hospital in Australia)

**Pilgrimage and Board Meeting of Mercy Investment Program (MIP) from the United States - 2006:**

- 'The Board and staff of Mercy Investment Program found great inspiration and affirmation in the Board meeting. We believe that our work to fulfil "The Ministry of Stewardship" is an echo of Catherine McAuley's commitment to bring the concerns of the poor, uneducated and disenfranchised before people of means. It was deeply moving to meet where Catherine's work began.'

**Mercy Collegiate Society Pilgrimage to Mercy International Centre, Georgian Court University New Jersey USA - 2008:**

- 'This lady put God in total control, and did great works for him. I admire her legacy and the reputation she has left behind, and for that she will never die.'
- 'Staying in this house has showed me the true power of faith.... she [Catherine] is an inspiration like no other.'
- 'Staying in the house of Catherine McAuley, I learned that going against the norm is always a bold effort especially when it comes to service of the poor.'

**Multicultural Programme - 2008:**

- 'This has given me a sense of how to be with the poor and it gives me great joy.'
- 'I now have great respect for each culture and great love for the sisters beyond the oceans.'
- 'This is a birthing of new life for me. I feel more integrated and open to other cultures. It is an integration of mind and heart. No one is better than the other. We are all the best.'
- 'This has helped me to work outside the box. I have a great closeness to Catherine and it is a turning point in my life.'
- 'This has made me promise to be with Catherine in a much firmer way and to be faithful in my work with the poor and in unity with all my mercy family.'
- 'Catherine is here in each of us and is calling us forth.'

**Catherine's Suscipe: Prayer of a 'Social Mystic' - led by Mary Pat Garvin rsm - 2010:**

- 'So much ground covered in one week.... The shift that has taken place for me touches both my prayer and ministry - beginning with my going to sleep and waking up saying the Suscipe.'
- 'I found the whole experience refreshing and inspirational. Hearing all of this in Catherine's house was special.'
- 'I am thrilled I came at 82!! I hope to come again, please God.'

**Engaging with the Spirit of Catherine McAuley to Look at Mercy Today - led by Deirdre Mullan rsm - 2010:**

- 'I've thought and thought and I just couldn't improve on a thing. Maybe the weather could have been kinder but that's out of your control!! I loved everything.'

**Catherine McAuley and Life in the Gospels - led by Mary C Sullivan rsm - 2011:**

- 'I was privileged to participate in a programme facilitated by the world authority on Catherine McAuley. Mary's own faith, not just her academic scholarship, life experience and kinship with Catherine permeated her presentations and her leadership throughout the week. I felt her approach of scriptural basis and Catherine McAuley's parallels was excellent. I thought her prayerful preparation for each session was an example to us all.'

- 'I wish I knew this material earlier in my religious life. Catherine is such a model - so much in her to emulate. I held on to every word and read and prayed over the letters of Catherine. Inspiring and informative.'

#### **Final Vow Programme - led by Áine Barrins rsm and Anne Reid - 2011:**

- 'Yo estoy muy agradecida a Dios y cada una de ustedes por todo lo que hicieron para que esta experiencia "el encuentro con Catalina sea tan profunda." ¡¡Realmente para mi fue una bendición de Dios y de Catalina misma. Muchísimas gracias por todo!!' (Nidia Maritza Huanacuni Quispe rsm, Peru)
- 'The whole program is great and wonderful. We have good facilitators who can touch our lives. It's a glorious thing to be here in Catherine's home. Please keep going...'

#### **Pilgrimage of Young Mercy Leaders - 2011:**

- 'I really like the international aspect of the programme. Even though we are a Mercy school, I never thought beyond Ireland. I didn't even realise there were schools or even universities outside of Ireland.'
- 'This experience solidified my appreciation for a woman who made a huge impact in the world. I hope I can somehow follow in her footsteps and I know, if I grow to be half of the merciful person she was, I will have lived my life well.'
- 'I feel as if this conference and its components as a whole contribute to my ability to take on more of a leadership role both on and off campus. Certain components of this conference have heightened my level of understanding involving justice and mercy. I feel better prepared with the necessary tools and skills to take more of a leadership role involving these important charisms at my school.'
- 'It was wonderfully heartening to see how engaged these talented young people are, how natural it is for them to "think globally," and how eagerly they want to make the world a better place. With a generation like this soon coming into their own, surely there is great hope for displaced women and girls from around the world now mired in extreme poverty. Let's hear it for today's youth!'

#### **Elements of Mercy - led by Mary Wickham rsm - 2012:**

- The spirit and atmosphere of the house is palpable and added an undefinable something to the retreat.
- The presentations were excellent. It brought the topic alive. It was a wonderful experience meeting Sisters from different countries and hearing about their work.

#### **Online Theological Reflection Course - led by Kathleen Rushton rsm - 2012:**

- The greatest strength is the international and global perspectives offered by the participants. A face and voice for 'one world' Mercy.
- Each individual has a wealth of knowledge and experience to contribute and enrich the process of theological reflection and understanding. The personal examples offered increased my own understanding of the topic discussed.
- The reading caused us to reflect on who we are and where our global journey brings us. It was wonderful to interact with others throughout the world and seeing things differently than we may have in the past. The perspectives broaden our horizons and help us to grow as followers of Christ.

#### **Mercy Ethos Programs, ISMAPNG - 2013:**

- I see the week as a kind of spiral, where we progressively delved deeper and deeper into Catherine's life at each stop along the road. By the end of the week I felt that this story was now my story, it resonated so deeply with my own dreams and desires.

- The Mercy Ethos Program provided an opportunity to contemplate the essence of who Catherine was and better understand the challenges she faced. Over the course of the week it was just so evident that Catherine led a life of great meaning and purpose. I came away from the program reminded of the centrality of faith to Catherine's mission and her amazing resourcefulness and practicality in undertaking her ministry.
- Joining the April 2013 Mercy Ethos Program and pilgrimage was indeed an amazing privilege. To be with people focused on the work of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy gave our group a united sense of purpose that I am sure will continue to sustain us in our work, and encourage us to continually reach higher goals to support women and children who experience vulnerability.... Catherine's example shows us that faith and clarity of purpose can allow us to achieve what might otherwise seem overwhelming

#### **Pilgrimage of Young Mercy Leaders - 2013:**

- Wonderful pilgrimage! Going into it, I didn't know what to expect, but it was more than I could have ever hoped for or imagined. I feel able to carry out the practical ways of exemplifying Catherine McAuley. Thank you so much for that life-changing experience!
- The highlights of this pilgrimage were meeting such wonderful people from the fellow pilgrims from Ireland, Belize, America, England and Australia to the sisters I met. It was a great experience to make new friends and meet such inspiring and interesting people. Another highlight for me was learning about the different ways in which I can speak to God, through music, through art, or through movement.
- I feel really inspired to be a leader in my school and show other students in my school the great work Mercy does and also how they can do this work by simply being kind to one another. I really want to lead the other students in my school to helping other people and I want to inspire them with Catherine's story and Sr Karen's stories too.
- This pilgrimage definitely brought Catherine 'alive' more because the love of all you Sisters for Catherine shone from you, and you all spoke with passion. It was so much more than just reading her life in a book. You spoke of her as if she was a beloved family member! Also, the knowledge and scope of Mercy presence worldwide was new to me.
- The in depth workshops not only focused on our lives but on how we are connected to Mother McAuley today. She was so strong in her faith and she never lost her way even in times of utter despair. Knowing now that I am part of the continuation of what she started all those years ago is so overwhelming and amazing!

#### **Catherine McAuley and the Following of Jesus Christ Today (by Mary C Sullivan rsm) - 2013:**

- Mary Sullivan is pure gift to us all and to hear from the foremost researcher and writer on Catherine McAuley and her life with her sisters was one of the richest experiences of my religious life. I trust Mary's content and the image of Catherine she offers to us. I also greatly appreciated the deliberate and well-paced manner in which Mary presented. It was filled with reverence and appreciation for Catherine.

# Some reflections on the Catherine programmes can be read online here:

[http://mercyworld.org/news\\_centre/view\\_article.cfm?id=861](http://mercyworld.org/news_centre/view_article.cfm?id=861)

# Some reflections on Wellspring programmes can be read here:

**for 2013:** [http://www.mercyworld.org/news\\_centre/view\\_article.cfm?loadref=0&id=745](http://www.mercyworld.org/news_centre/view_article.cfm?loadref=0&id=745)

**for 2012:** [http://www.mercyworld.org/news\\_centre/view\\_article.cfm?loadref=1&id=681](http://www.mercyworld.org/news_centre/view_article.cfm?loadref=1&id=681)

**for 2011:** [http://www.mercyworld.org/news\\_centre/view\\_article.cfm?id=534](http://www.mercyworld.org/news_centre/view_article.cfm?id=534)

