

Acknowledgements

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Finally, I salute you, my Sisters of Mercy, who work daily in 44 countries and use the language of Mercy and compassion in the daily business of your lives. You are indeed the cloud of witnesses who bring the Beatitudes to Life.

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Notes

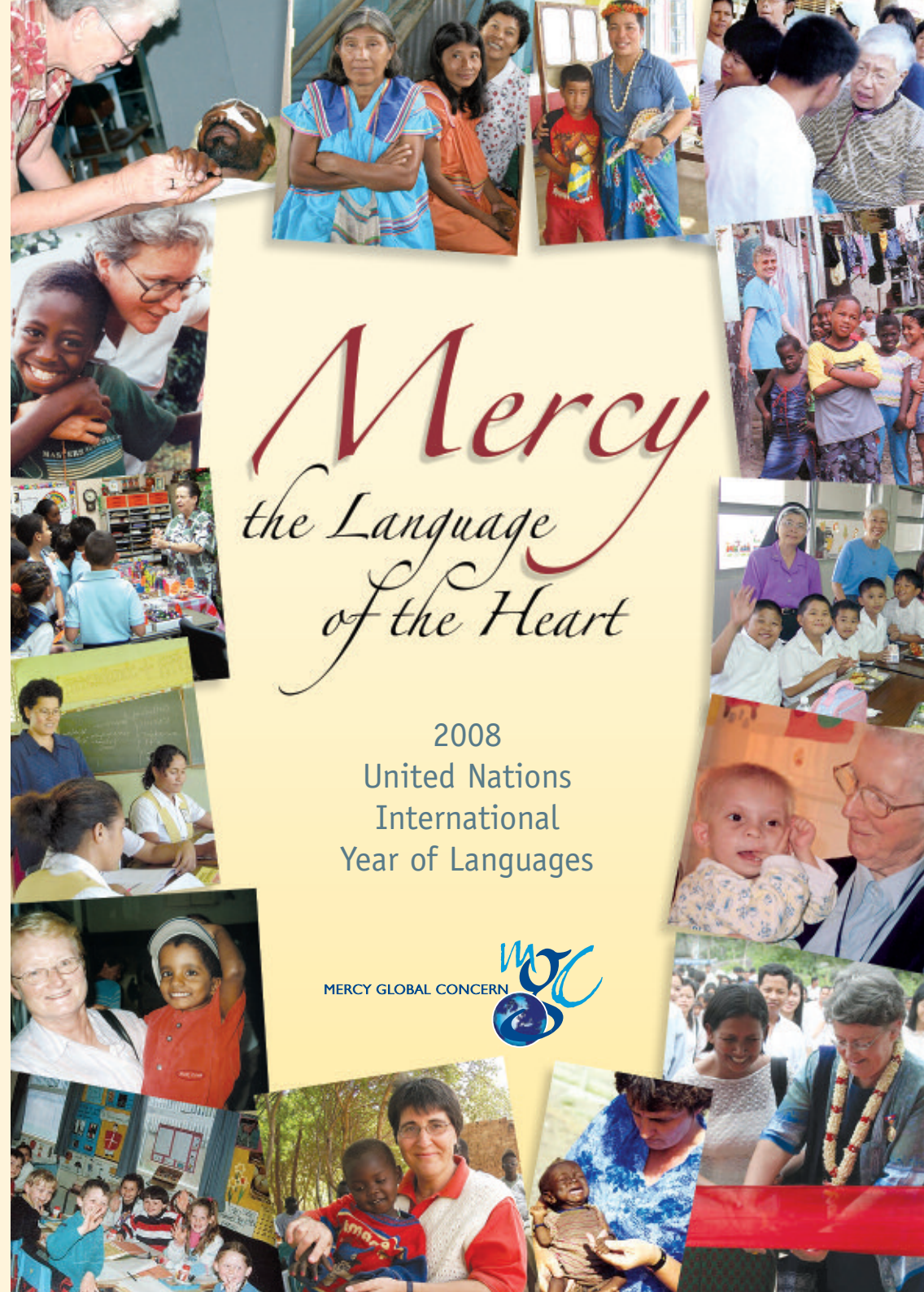
1. D. B. Mullan, *The Little Book of Catherine of Dublin*, ALBC, Dublin 2005, p. 52.
2. Mary Sullivan, Mercy International Research Conference, November 2007.
3. Mercy International Research Conference, November 2007.
4. United Nations General Assembly: 10592, United Nations, New York.
5. D.B. Mullan *The Little Book of Catherine of Dublin*, ALBC, 2005, p. 104.

MERCY GLOBAL CONCERN



Mercy the Language of the Heart

2008
United Nations
International
Year of Languages



LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION



Worldwide Ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

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Successful communication using language is of critical importance for global organisations whose mission around the world transcends geographical, political and physical borders. The year 2008, the United Nations International Year of Languages, prompts us to stop for a moment and consider the role and functions of language, and the particular linguistic problems encountered by global

organisations, such as the Sisters of Mercy. This year highlights the special need for sensitivity and thoughtfulness with regard to language, especially when working in a multi-lingual environment. For the Sisters of Mercy, working as we do in 44 different countries, how we communicate God's compassionate love is a matter of vital significance.

Mercy

the Language of the Heart

MERCY – a Language of Action and Compassion

Our founder, Catherine McAuley, was born in Dublin, Ireland, on 29 September 1778, one of the three children of James and Elinor McCauley. James McAuley delighted in offering material support to the poor of the neighbourhood, while his wife Elinor was interested in the social life of fashionable Dublin. When Catherine was five years old, her father died and Elinor was left with the responsibility of raising three young children all under the age of six. After living for a time with her uncle, Owen Conway, Catherine moved to Coolock House, the twenty-two-acre estate of William and Catherine Callaghan. When the couple died, Catherine was the sole beneficiary of their estate. Pondering how best to help the poor of her day, she purchased a property in Baggot Street and Herbert Street, Dublin, on which she planned to erect a building that would serve as a centre for religious, educational and charitable activities. Towards the end of 1827, the house on Baggot Street was ready for occupation. The House of Mercy was opened on 24 September 1827. Little did Catherine and her companions, Mary Ann Doyle and Catherine Byrn, realize that this was the first step in the establishment of the worldwide institute of the Sisters of Mercy.

“We should be as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre. Our centre is God, from whom all actions should spring as from their centre.”¹



Mercy

Catherine McAuley was touched and formed by this wellspring of God’s mercy. In her desire to address poverty and its expression in 19th-century Ireland, she founded the Sisters of Mercy as a corporate body who would vow to serve the poor, the sick and the ignorant.

In her presentation at the Mercy International Research Conference held in Burlingame, Mary Sullivan RSM highlighted the scriptural verse that was the guiding text of Catherine’s life and work:

“Twice in the early chapters of her Rule, Catherine cites Matthew 25.40:

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’



... Although [Catherine] never spoke about the ‘prophetic’ quality of religious life or about its ‘countercultural’ character – such vocabulary and analysis were unavailable to her – her life and that of the first sisters was fully and voluntarily prophetic.”²

From that early beginning in Ireland, the Sisters of Mercy are today spread over 44 countries, working in a multitude of ministries.



“We Sisters of Mercy in the twenty-first century are in radical communion beyond all borders. We are grounded in the compassion of God.”³

But how do we continue to maintain this ‘radical communion beyond all borders’? How do we ensure that the language we use is capable of this highly sensitive task? We need to remain fully aware of the issues involved.

the Language of the Heart

2008: United Nations International Year of Languages

On 21 May 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages, in an effort to promote unity in diversity and global understanding.



"The General Assembly this afternoon, recognizing that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages.



Acting without a vote, the Assembly, also recognizing that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally, emphasized the paramount importance of the equality of the Organization's six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).



In that regard, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that all language services were given equal treatment and were provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources. The Secretary-General was also requested to complete the task of publishing all important older United Nations documents on the Organization's website in all six official languages, on a priority basis."⁴

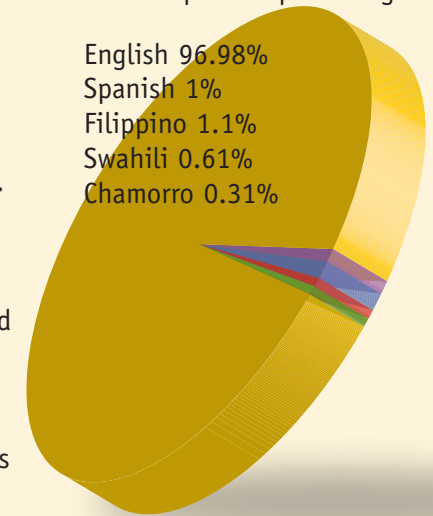


Mercy – the Language of the Heart

When we go about the 'daily business of our lives', the way in which we communicate the language of Mercy is probably the same wherever there are Mercy Sisters. We try to use inclusive, non-sexist, respectful words and concepts. While the dominant language of the worldwide Sisters of Mercy is English, we need to pay attention to the use of other languages used by the Sisters of Mercy and also to be sensitive to their languages. For the purpose of this booklet, which is to look at ministry languages other than English, the list below shows the countries in which we currently work.

Argentina	Lebanon
Australia	Mexico
Bahamas	New Zealand
Belize	Nigeria
Brazil	Pakistan
Cambodia	Panama
Canada	Papua New Guinea
Chile	Peru
East Timor	Philippines
England	Puerto Rico
Federation States of Micronesia	Romania
France	Samoa
Ghana	Scotland
Guam	South Africa
Guatemala	Sudan
Guyana	Tonga
Haiti	Uganda
Honduras	USA
India	Wales
Ireland	West Papua
Italy	Zambia
Jamaica	Zimbabwe
Kenya	

The following list shows the Ministry Languages used by the Sisters of Mercy, with their respective percentages.



Other languages used:

Maori
Gaelic
Samoan
Tongan
Hiri/Tok/Pisan

Wherever the Sisters of Mercy are in the world, our work and thrust is as carriers of the Mercy of God, using Mercy, the language of the heart.

As Catherine herself pointed out,

"... every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to wherever possible."⁵

Mercy

the Language of the Heart