

REFLECTION SHEET 1 - MERCY IS BOLD

The following reflective songs, quotations, poems and news items are intended to enable a reflective process rather than to be used as a prayer service in one sitting.

Theme Song

Mercy is Bold by Helen Kearins rsm from "In This Land"

Chorus

Mercy is bold

And the rivers run to the sea

Mother of Mercy

A God who calls us to be

Women and men

Dancing spirit of fire

Birthers of life

Standing strong with desire

Breaking waters of justice,

Tough souling love that won't tire.

I walked through the world
Thinking I was the centre and creed.
Me and my god
Bringing mercy to all those in need.
But wombing compassion
Won't leave me alone,
The weaving of life
Takes me far beyond home
To the joining with others
Whose hearts beat a similar tone.

We built institutions
To hold what one wouldn't contain.
And now we face asking
How much of these walls can remain,
To treasure the stories
That set us on fire
And free us to follow
The earth's new desire!
Hold gently the web
Releasing what now must transpire.

The earth's crying out:
'You are using far more than you need.
My soil, sky and water and creatures
Cannot sustain greed.
Who'll ask the bold questions
Propose a new day,
Challenge the structures
That stand in the way
Of a transforming oneness
Where all on the earth inter-play!

Jesus Speaks

LUKE 4: 16 - 30 - The Rejection at Nazareth -- From the New American Bible

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”

He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb, ‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”

And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.

Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land.

It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.

Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury.

They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong.

But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Catherine Speaks

Letter to Mary Ann Doyle September 24, 1841

We have ever confided largely in Divine Providence and shall continue to do so.

Letter to Angela Dunne December 20, 1837

Put your whole confidence in God. He never will let you want necessaries for yourself or children.

Letter to Frances Warde November 17, 1838

Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible.

Letter to Frances Warde October 23, 1837

May God bless and animate you with His own divine spirit, that you may prove it is Jesus Christ you love and serve with your whole heart.

Familiar Instructions, p. 11

...should we not then undertake our duties with great courage, for infinite is the love God bears to souls who repose in His protection.

The Spirit of the Institute

It follows from what has been said that each society of religious receives a grace particularly adapted to the duties which they are called to perform. We ought then have great confidence in God in the discharge of all these offices of Mercy, spiritual and corporal, which constitute the business of our lives, and assure ourselves that God will particularly concur with us to render them efficacious as by His infinite mercy we daily experience and this proceeds as we have said before from the grace belonging to the vocation or grace of the order.

Suscipe

My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence with the most lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity. Grant me, O most merciful Redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety; suffer nothing to sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of you, my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom.

Pope Francis Speaks

VESPERS WITH PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS - St Patrick's Cathedral, New York - 24 September 2015

.....We can get caught up measuring the value of our apostolic works by the standards of efficiency, good management and outward success which govern the business world. Not that these things are unimportant! We have been entrusted with a great responsibility, and God's people rightly expect accountability from us. But the true worth of our apostolate is measured by the value it has in God's eyes. To see and evaluate things from God's perspective calls for constant conversion in the first days and years of our vocation and, need I say, it calls for great humility. The cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labours. And if at times our efforts and works seem to fail and produce no fruit, we need to remember that we are followers of Jesus... and his life, humanly speaking, ended in failure, in the failure of the cross.

.....In a special way I would like to express my esteem and my gratitude to the religious women of the United States. What would the Church be without you? Women of strength, fighters, with that spirit of courage which puts you in the front lines in the proclamation of the Gospel. To you, religious women, sisters and mothers of this people, I wish to say "thank you", a big thank you... and to tell you that I love you very much.

I know that many of you are in the front lines in meeting the challenges of adapting to an evolving pastoral landscape. Whatever difficulties and trials you face, I ask you, like Saint Peter, to be at peace and to respond to them as Christ did: he thanked the Father, took up his cross and looked forward!

APOSTOLIC LETTER TO ALL CONSECRATED PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

The Year of Consecrated Life challenges us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do we have the same passion for our people, are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them? "The same generosity and self-sacrifice which guided your founders – Saint John Paul II once said – must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms which, by the power of the same Spirit who awakened them, are constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character. It is up to you to place those charisms at the service of the Church and to work for the coming of Christ's Kingdom in its fullness".

Joan McNamara rsm – “I can make all things new,” says the Lord. (Mercy Craving Realisation)

I can lift you up
out of the crumbling fragments of older days,
free you from binding routine of past ways.

I can make all things new
but not without pain –
pain in you.

I cannot give you the new
unless you loose your hold
on safe, trusted ways of old.
And between letting go and receiving,
loss and grief give ground to faith and hope
engendering loving risk and patient exploration.

I cannot fill your hands
until you empty them.
Then I can lift you up
as I was lifted up
(averse to it all,
in loneliness, failure and pain
on a cross of shame)
into life's fullness.

The process is old,
old as the fruit-bearing grain.
The fruit is always new.

Why do you loiter (without clear intent)
in half-filled houses of a land
where homelessness is crying pain?
Why do you cling to serving yesterday's need
when the here and now anguish for Mercy?
Why do you shore up the status quo,
silent before inequality and pain
when my fierce Word
burns to be heard?
Why do you patch, mend and maintain
what is past effective repair
when dismantlement is the only way
to new possibilities demanding exploration
and Mercy craving realisation?

Come, follow me, with open hands.
I will lift you up and make you new.

Finding Fire, Casting Fire (to Catherine McAuley – a personal reflection) Brenda Peddigrew, RSM - 25 July 2006

For too many years I've been thinking of you too much and relating to you too little. Lately, I've been brooding about you, searching for what it was that opened your eyes to the world and compelled you to cast your fire upon it.

You neither loved wealth, nor feared it.
Rather, you used it with confidence, trusting your own perception of how it should be given and enjoyed.
No false poverty for you, no scrimping and saving for the sake of it, no bowing and scraping to authority.
You knew your own authority and acted on it, being personally intimate with the God whose source it was.
You wanted your women to do the same.
This is poverty.

Neither did you seriously doubt your vision, however hard others tried to make you do so. Though it was previously unheard of – what you wanted women to do and be – and though ecclesial princes would have you believe it impossible, scandalous – you listened to your inner voices and trusted them.
You felt the fire of God bringing about a new thing and that fire walked you through all the false claims of small minds and even smaller hearts, your first allegiance to inner, not outer authority.
This is obedience.

And oh how you weren't afraid to love!
Love pours through your words, which we still read, streams through all the ways you found to brighten the lives of women with confidence in themselves.
Love shines through your steady respect for the women who joined you in the work, for their health, for their enthusiasms.
You weren't afraid to love Frances best of all and let it be known You were a lover. From it came your strength.
Not for you the fearful frozen distance that passes for celibacy, hiding in tradition, rules and overwork.
This is chastity.

After all the years, I see that your fire was a mirror for my own and that's how you would have wanted it.
Not for you the hero worship with the worshipper placing you on a pedestal and avoiding herself, shirking her own power.
Not for you the hiding behind imposed authority already dead from killing other spirits.
Not for you the life of comfort you might have had and couldn't while you saw anyone in distress.
Your security disappeared when you used your whole fortune for one house against all advice and still you chose that inner fire, telling you otherwise.

I see a line of fire reaching back from me to you.
Since I was a child, I knew you were my ancestor, a true grandmother, a wise elder.
Now that I am older than you were when you died, I finally grasp what legacy you give me over decades and lost time.
It's the legacy of fire, my own fire, inspired by you but not yours.
You ask me what my fire is telling me, what in my world needs to be challenged so that the poor, the wounded and the lost can find a bit of light. Your fire is not your works, but yourself.
This is charism.

I think you're proud of us all, all the thousands who have lived your vision, covering the world with lived Mercy.

I think you're surprised by what faithfulness to your own vision brought about. I think you'd want the same faithfulness for each of us, joining our singular visions into your large one.

You don't want us stuck in the very structures you rejected.

You don't want us held back by long range plans that unsuccessfully try to contain the freedom of Spirit.

You never wanted us hierarched, divided, mistrustful and afraid to offend.

You want us fired up, free, focused on the broken world and loving intensely in all ways, letting any structures we need grow around that and not the other way around...

"How? I ask you? How can we? The world is big and we are so set in our ways."

You laugh. "So was my world," you say, "and everyone around me.

Look within, each one of you alone for awhile.

When you find your fire, get together.

Throw off the blinders of should and must and can't and especially the blinders of this-is-how-it's-always-been-done.

You cannot get to a new place going the old way.

Trust the fire of God that is beyond human structures and remember that Church is also a human structure that needs waking up from time to time.

We don't set out to do that but being who we really are seems to have that effect.

That's how it's done.

You are not my daughters, but my sisters. We are equals."

And as often happened, I have read about you, there is a twinkle in your eye and a dance to your step as you tell me this.

From the News

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/bread-for-the-journey-the-greek-baker-who-remembers/ar-AAeEJpH>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/17/bishops-rebuke-cameron-over-refugees>

....and others from your own local and national news or other International news happening as you reflect!

Other Voices

Dom Helder Camera

"When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint.

When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist."

[Look Again - a poem by Sara Kandiah \(www.restoredrelationships.org\)](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)

Stop

Seek out my story

Ask what happened

Hear my voice

Listen to me

Allow me to interrupt your life with my life

Look again
don't just take a cursory skim read
or scan my face like the results of an online search
My life matters
my experience matters
Don't let this moment pass you by before letting what needs to happen, happen.
Be vulnerable
Let the walls of your heart come down for a moment
Feel exposed
Stay in that awkward, uncomfortable place
don't let my pain cause you to shut down your emotions
Look again
At my face,
at my scars,
at my heart.

You can shed a silent tear
But if that's all that I am to you, an emotional response, then walk on, and pass me by.
I want my story and my life to mean something to you
to provoke you into action
to stir you to pray for girls and women like me
To inspire you to stand up
to challenge you to make a difference
to walk a mile and pray
Be someone changed.
Look again

We pray with Jesus

[Abwoon \(Father-Mother of the Cosmos\) – San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DE4MIHdXIGE>

The Aramaic Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4

Chant composed in the ancient Dorian mode by Christopher Moroney · Improvised solo by Covita Moroney

Aramaic is a Middle Eastern language that was the native tongue of Jesus of Nazareth, and common to the Israel/Palestine region during the first century c.e. This musical setting of the prayer of Jesus—sometimes called the Lord's Prayer—includes traditional Middle Eastern percussion, rhythms, and improvisational modal chanting. All the Semitic languages — including Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic — use a root system which allows one word to hold multiple meanings. Thus, a tradition of translation arose in the Middle East that led to each word of a prophet being considered on many different levels of meaning.

Abwoon d'bvashmayo, nethqadash shmok. Te-the malkutokh. Nehwé tseby o-nokh, aykano d'bvash'mayo of -ba'r'o. Habv lan lahma d'sunqonan yow-mano, Washboqlan hawbén w'kh-t'hén, aykano dof h'nan shba-qn l'hayobén. W'lo tahlán l'nesyun'eh, elo patson men bisho. Metol d'dilok hi malkutokh, w'haylo, w'teshbuh-to lo'alam 'o-l'min. Amén.

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,

focus your light within us. Create your reign of unity now. Your one desire then acts with ours, as in all light, so in all forms. Grant what we need each day in bread and insight. Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' guilt. Don't let surface things delude us, but free us from what holds us back. From You is born all ruling will, the power and the life to do, the song that beautifies all, from age to age it renews. Truly—power to these statements—may they be the ground from which all our actions grow. Amen.

(Translation and commentary from Aramaic Peshitta by Neil Douglas-Klotz, from "Desert Wisdom"- ©1995 Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved, Abwoon Study Circle, www.abwoon.org)

Closing Song

Watch O Lord – Text St Augustine of Hippo. Adapt. Marty Haugen – Turn my Heart

Watch, O Lord, with all those awake this night.

Watch, O Lord, with all those who weep.

Give Your angels and saints
charge over all who sleep.

Tend Your ailing ones:

in Your love, Lord;

Rest Your weary ones:

in Your love, Lord;

Bless your dying ones:

in Your love, O Lord of all.

Soothe Your suffering ones:

Heal afflicted ones:

Shield Your joyous ones:

Hold Your grieving ones:

RAISE Your fallen ones:

Mend Your broken ones:

Guard Your little ones:

Guide Your searching ones:

Grant us all Your peace: