

2018 – A Family Celebration

Family events are great occasions – for remembering; for celebrating; for experiencing anew our connectedness. Sometimes they can also focus our attention on sadder things: the one who is absent; the ones who may be suffering sickness or loss or bereavement or anxiety about a troubling situation and so on. In these situations they call for our mutual understanding, support and empathy.

This year will mark a wonderful once in every three-year world event- the [World Meeting of Families](#), to be held in Dublin, Ireland in the last week in August, hopefully in the presence of Pope Francis. However the entire year is a graced opportunity to reflect on and celebrate family, be that our family of origin, our mercy family, our global family.

Catherine McAuley & Family



All of us belong to a family of origin and each one's family story is unique. It contributes much to our shaping and moulding and to the building blocks of who we become. Biographies, autobiographies and memoirs can be fascinating as individuals share their family stories with us- stories that may touch into our own, evoking memory, challenge, inspiration.

Catherine's family story and more particularly how it shaped her is one of particular significance to us. In the accounts of her early childhood, we get glimpses of happy family life – a father who was a man of faith and commitment to his family and to the needs of others and who had an impactful influence on his daughter Catherine, even at a very young age; a young mother who was gentle, fastidious and charming and whose influence and training contributed much to Catherine's great refinement of manner, her graciousness, her independent mind and her personal charm; two siblings- a brother and sister. However from the age of five onwards, Catherine was raised in a one parent family and

she was orphaned in her teens. From there on, sometimes separated from her brother and sister, she was fostered by friends and relatives on whom she depended to provide her with family support. While enjoying their hospitality and appreciating their generosity, she knew at times what it was to be a burden on their resources and at other times to be somewhat of an outsider, particularly in regards to her religious beliefs. Perhaps it was these experiences that made her so family centered. She nursed her sister Mary in her final illness and cared for her nieces and nephews after Mary's death. This

responsibility meant that she could not take up residence in Baggot St. when the House of Mercy was ready because Mary's daughter was too young to undertake the management of her father's household. Catherine stayed to care for the young family and entrusted the responsibility of the House of Mercy to Mary Anne Doyle and Catherine Byrne, supporting them as best she could.

Catherine acted as mother to nine children: her 3 nephews and 2 nieces (her sister Mary's children); her cousin Anne Conway's 2 daughters, Teresa and Catherine and two orphans, whom she had fostered while in Coolock. In addition to the usual demands of caring for children, Catherine had the painful experience of the deaths of four of these, (Mary's children) during her own life time as well as the estrangement of a fifth – Willie- Mary's youngest child.

While not officially becoming their adopted daughter, Catherine behaved in every way as a daughter to William and Catherine Callaghan, supporting them in the administration of their household; sharing a loving friendship with them and devotedly caring for them in their sickness, old age and journey into death.

Catherine's brother James also figured in her life. Their different faith allegiances may have caused some distance between them and he certainly did not approve of the Baggot Street project – referring to it as Kitty's Folly but they did remain in communication. He and his family were at her bedside in her final illness and he spent time alone with her before her death.

Programmes for the coming year will include an on-line presentation on the theme of 'Catherine & Family' and another on 'Catherine – a family carer', while the theme of family will feature in a number of other programmes, including the Young Mercy Leaders Programme.

The Mercy Family



December 12th, 1831 marks the formal establishment of the Mercy Family, although the community of lay Mercy women had begun to form from September 1827. From the beginning, the ministry of Mercy had a particular focus on family: the education of girls, - a ministry as Catherine pointed out ensures that *'wherever a religious woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found'*, the visitation of families, especially where sickness and ill health were suffered; the counselling of those who came to the House of Mercy *'with their disputes and quarrels'*; the instruction and training of young women who were out of home and who resided at the House of Mercy *as their own home*. From this courageous initiative the family of Mercy spread throughout the world and now comprise over 7,000 Sisters, 5,000 Associates and at least a quarter of a million partners-in-Ministry. Members of the Mercy Family minister in more than 40 countries in the areas of education, health and social services and in myriad settings that further social, political, economic and spiritual wellbeing.

As our Mercy Family celebrates 2018 as a year dedicated to family, we will, over the course of the year, in *MercyNews*, highlight each of our 40 + locations in which the Mercy Family ministers today

The Global Family



MERCY INTERNATIONAL REFLECTION PROCESS

Flaming the Fire of Mercy: Creation Waiting in Eager Longing

While each branch of the Mercy family has its own particular culture and traditions, our collective family identity and embrace of Mercy values enables us to contribute to building a better world on a scale which Catherine may never have imagined. This has been particularly brought home to us through our engagement in the *Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP)*.

In the Year of Mercy 2016, Mercy International Association invited all our congregations and institutes together with our partners-in-Mercy to enter into the grace and challenge of contemplative space and to join in this Reflection Process so that we could discern globally a shared response to the cry

of the Earth and the cry of the Poor, thus flaming the fire of Mercy in us and in our Universe.

The process engaged participants in four movements which are cyclical: beginning with experience; analyzing that experience in a broader context; engaging the wisdom traditions in light of the analysis; and concluding with an articulation of a vision that finds expression in new actions to bring about change. The engagement of participants in this process drew them into a way of reflecting, resulting in the beginning of an articulation of a new vision and praxis for the global Mercy family – an active Mercy Global Presence. Hundreds of groups connected with the 12 congregations and institutes participated in the Reflection Process, following the four stages in varying ways over the course of 2016. Among the approximately five thousand participants were Sisters of Mercy, Associates, partners-in-Mercy, school children, older adults, people from various Christian denominations and other faith traditions, and people without any religious tradition. Accompanying the groups were many other persons and groups who significantly influenced the process by their prayerful support and attention to each Stage of the process. Additional groups were engaged in the process through alignment with other processes unfolding within their congregations or institutes, e.g., Chapter preparations, justice forums. Out of the

sacred listening and contemplative dialogue in which the groups engaged came a focus on two key themes: (i) displacement of persons, and (ii) degradation of Earth. In most instances, the two themes were intersecting with a focus on one leading to implications for the other.

Arising from the process the question arose: 'To what kind of Mercy Global Presence is MIRP calling u?' In response, there slowly emerged a new vision for Mercy Global Presence. The actions that the groups had identified reflected a sense of being a global community which has a greater possibility of understanding the painful complexities of the displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth and has a greater capacity to respond in the forty plus countries in which they live and minister. The Mercy International Reflection Process gave glimpses of what an intentional entity, Mercy Global Presence, would look like. It would be an organic entity linking congregations/ institutes, individual Sisters of Mercy and Associates, partners in Mercy, and Mercy International Association in creative and energizing ways. Such a Mercy Global Presence would be a countercultural sign in a globalized world which has made more extreme the displacement of persons and degradation of Earth. It would further the dream of the globalization of mercy and compassion. In a world of displacement, Mercy Global Presence will champion inclusion. In a world of degradation of the environment, Mercy Global Presence will realize its oneness in the sacred communion of all creation. The Mercy world has heard "the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor" in a new way. It will respond by seeing Mercy in a new way and by daring Mercy in a new way.

Much more work needs to be done to set out further steps along the journey.

The World Meeting of Families will be nothing more than a passing event, if it doesn't allow us, the Mercy Family, to be a voice that responds to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor- as we grow and develop in our care for our common home.

- ***Our hope*** is that all Congregations, Institutes and Partners in Mercy will together and individually respond to these cries,
- ***Our intention*** is that the work of Mercy International Association, through its strategic and implementation plans will focus on the creation of a Mercy Global Presence and
- ***Our promise*** is that we will, through the Mercy World website and our weekly Mercy e-News, continue to promote interconnection and provide resources in enabling all as we continue our Mercy journey together.

OFFICIAL FAMILY PRAYER FOR WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018

God, our Father,
We are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son,
One family, in the Spirit of your love.

Bless us with the joy of love.

Make us patient and kind,
gentle and generous,
welcoming to those in need.

Help us to live your forgiveness and peace.

Protect all families with your loving care,
Especially those for whom we now pray:

[We pause and remember family members and others by name].

Increase our faith,
Strengthen our hope,
Keep us safe in your love,
Make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share.

This we ask, through Christ our Lord,
Amen

Dios, Padre nuestro,
Somos hermanos y hermanas en Jesús, tu Hijo,
Una familia, en el Espíritu de tu amor.

Bendícenos con la alegría del amor.

Haznos pacientes y bondadosos,
Amables y generosos
Acogedores de aquellos que tienen necesidad.
Ayúdanos a vivir tu perdón y tu paz.

Protege a todas las familias con tu cuidado amoroso,
Especialmente a aquellos por los que ahora te pedimos:

[Hacemos una pausa y recordamos a los miembros de las familias y a otras personas por su nombre].

Incrementa nuestra fe,
Fortalece nuestra esperanza,
Protégenos con tu amor, Haz que seamos siempre agradecidos por el regalo de la vida que compartimos.

Te lo pedimos, por Jesucristo nuestro Señor,

Amén

Article by Mary Reynolds rsm, CEO MIA, first published in MercyNews Issue #755, 23 January 2018
Email: director@mercyinternational.ie
Website: www.mercyworld.org

Prayer: Official Family Prayer for World Meeting of Families 2018.
Website: www.worldmeeting2018.ie