

History of Mercy International Association



The story of the Association is a story of which we are all a part and like any good story one chapter links to the next to form a moving coherent whole. But unlike the experience of many of our written stories we do not have the luxury of

taking a peep at the end to see how it all turns out. However we do know the beginning of the story



Catherine opened the House of Mercy in 1827 on the boundary between those who were rich and poor in Dublin at that time. She did this because of her desire to address poverty and its expressions in 19th century Ireland.

The mercy mission spread throughout the world through daring women willing to respond in various countries. For over 150 years, the call was to move the founding spirit of Catherine to all parts of the world to address whatever the most significant needs might be. During these 150 or so years, the Convent of Mercy on Baggot Street continued to respond to the needs of the poor in Dublin under the care of the Sisters of Mercy, Dublin.

In the 1980s, discernment began about the future of the house at 64 Lower Baggot Street. In conversation about its future in 1989, Mary Trainer rsm from the USA and Sr Sebastian Cashen, who was then the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy, Dublin, raised the possibility of an international collaboration in the restoration of this historic place. Under their guidance, interest in the future of the Baggot Street house was aroused among Sisters of Mercy worldwide. It is a sobering thought that when Mary Trainer called the first meeting of the Mercy Leaders in 1989 it took her some time to find out who were the Congregational Leaders and how many of them there were.

Thanks to Mary's painstaking perseverance, the meeting did take place and Sisters of Mercy worldwide addressed the question, "Have you a dream for Baggot Street?"

Formation of MIA

Three years of intensive discernment of this question followed and the consensus was that the original house founded by Catherine should be held as a heritage house and Mercy home for the Sisters of Mercy, worldwide. In order to hold it as such, Mercy International Association was formed. This was an association of the leaders of the Mercy families around the world –



Americas, Australia, England, Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and the Philippines. In all, this represented Mercy present in 45 countries.

Mercy International Association

In 1992, the memorandum and articles of association of Mercy International

Association were signed, and ownership of 64 Lower Baggot Street was transferred from the Sisters of Mercy, Dublin to Mercy International Association.

The property was refurbished and it was reopened as Mercy International Centre in 1994.



‘...recognition that something deeper than a building project was being brought to birth...’

However from the start, it was recognised ‘that something deeper than a building project was being brought to birth.’

Seen as a potential hub of international activity the centre was described as a forum for mutual support and collaboration on a global level – a means of furthering the mission of mercy worldwide.

New Possibilities

**..we join
with
others..**

As a catalyst for global possibilities MIA enables *Mercies to network* for mission in ways not possible while they operated only as autonomous congregations.

Living into the reality of what was created in 1992 has been the experience of the Association for the last 18 years. Describing the Association as aspiring ‘*to continue the work of Catherine McAuley ... in ways which are both creative and appropriate to the needs of the world for the time being, the memorandum of association (1992) created new, global possibilities for being Mercy in the 21st century.* What was new about the Association was the *international collaboration of nine major congregational groups worldwide.* Having a partnership relationship as they embarked on this new project, the question for the Sisters of mercy and still is: *What can we do better together that we could not do alone?*

Over the 18 years of its existence, the Association has given rise to many networks which now give its international collaboration a basic geographic shape.



The outreach activities of the association have brought together many people engaged in similar ministries in geographically diverse places.

The international Mercy networks have not come into being as a result of top down decision making processes. They have sprung up from the hearts of the people who have felt the need to be in communion and to share the ways in which Mercy is drawing them

Behind each project is the dream that MIA can birth a future where, in the spirit of Catherine, they can be globally interconnected and where they can connect the rich and the poor for the life of the world.

Mercy International Centre

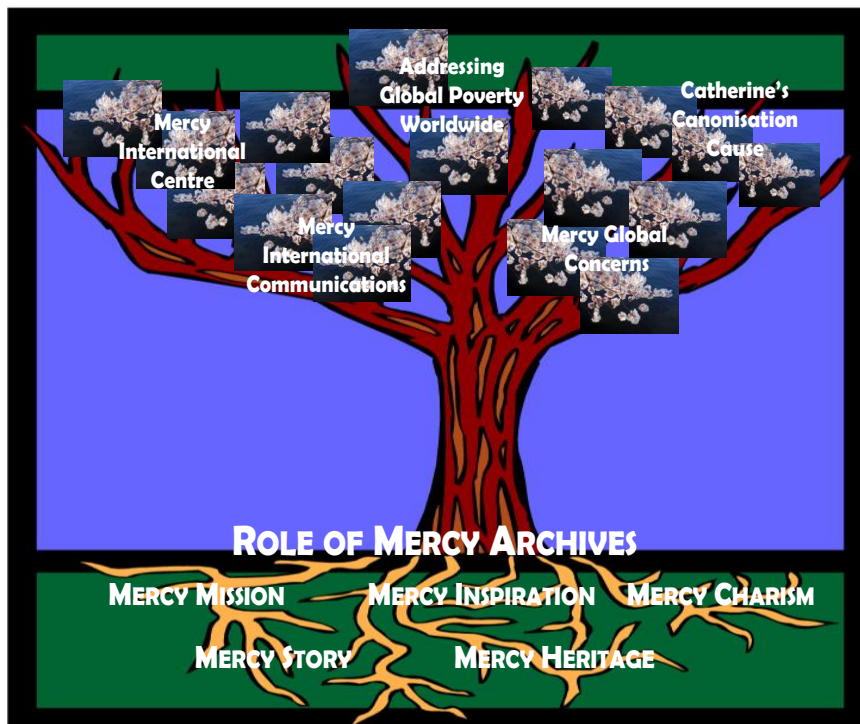
The *Mercy International Centre* is the place to which people are drawn for heritage, pilgrimage and hospitality; where Mercies ‘water their roots’.



It now comprises the 2 buildings of Baggot Street and Herbert Street. Many activities are offered to promote renewal and pilgrimage and the hospitality of Catherine’s home is known among Sisters of Mercy everywhere. A major ministry reaching out to women working in prostitution was housed in the Catherine McAuley Centre on Herbert Street; this is the adjacent property to Mercy International Centre. This ministry operated there for several years until it outgrew the premises and moved to a larger location. The Herbert Street building will now become an integral part of the Mercy International Centre building and will enhance the ministry outreach of MIC and MIA.

Archives

The role of MIA *Archives* is to protect, preserve and use documentation of the Mercy story in such a way that it is an inspiration for contemporary and future Mercy mission.



In 2001, the *MIA Archives Committee* was set up with a mandate to ensure that documentation of the Mercy story is protected, preserved, and used in such a way that it is an inspiration for contemporary and future mission. Among

the Archives collection is the Register of all the Sisters of Mercy from the beginnings worldwide; Writings by Catherine and by early Sisters up to 1850; artefacts relating to Catherine and to others.

Mercy Archives held an International Conference in November 2009, the theme of which was *Living, Telling and Supporting the Mercy Story*.

Research

An International *Mercy Research Commission* was established as a subcommittee of the archives committee. With a global outlook, the potential of research undertaken has enormous potential to motivate the International Mercy community. The Research commission has created a *bibliography of mercy research writing* and has facilitated a major theological reflection which engaged the energies of 26 invited Mercy Sisters from around the world.



These research papers were published as "*Fire cast on the earth kindling*" and are available on this website in the Heritage Section.

Justice Network

In 1996, a *Mercy International Justice Network (MIJN)* was formed and this network engaged in theological reflection and subsequent collaborative actions addressing issues including: Violence Against Women and Children, Racism, Globalization and Multinational Corporations.

When the first meeting of Justice personnel took place they declared *we have the passion, power and responsibility to effect transformation for Mercy and Justice in our world.*



Mercy Global Concern

In 1999, *Mercy Global Concern (MGC)* was established to represent Mercy at the United Nations and to influence issues such as the eradication of poverty, women's rights and safety, social development, and sustainable development. In addition, Mercy Global

Concern works to raise awareness of the Mercy community on global issues through briefing notes, reports and announcements.



“Promoting Human Solidarity
and Care for Earth”

Deirdre Mullen is the current representative of the Sisters of Mercy at the United Nations.



At the UN, Sisters of Mercy can advocate for the less privileged and make explicit preferential options within a huge network of international bodies.



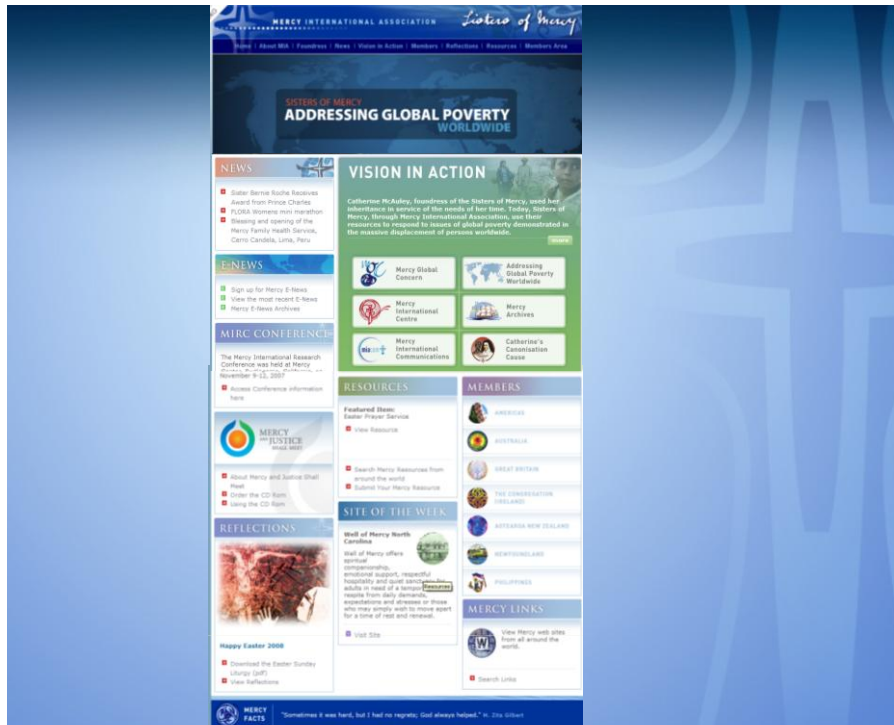
***Bridging the Gap* is a format used by Deirdre Mullen, Director of MGC to bring Mercy people to the United Nations to learn its relevance to the Mercy way. Another initiative that she has initiated is the Internship programme where a sister spends a term working with her at the UN. The interns work on an area of interest and their work becomes the basis of MGC publications.**

Communication

MIA has the great advantage of coming to birth at the same time as the cyberspace

revolution.

This has facilitated interconnection and awareness -raising around the Mercy world. *MIACOM (Mercy International Communications)* was established in 1998 to enhance worldwide



communications and to bring together a composite picture of Mercy ministry throughout the world. It has created for us the Mercy World website, which promotes integration, innovation and global communication within and among Mercy entities as well as Mercy E-News, Mercy World News and the Mercy and Justice CD Rom. The Mercy World website has a huge potential to foster Mercy outreach and it attracts thousands of visitors each month.

Creative and successful to the point where it outgrew its technological capacity the former www.mercyworld.org website is now replaced by a super highway web platform which offers huge possibilities for the development of the MIA vision.

***Mercy e-News* is also a marvellous vehicle for promoting the MIA vision and for enhanced communication. Currently there are about 100 new subscribers monthly.**



With a passion which grew out of hearing stories of people who defied all the odds to make a difference, the CD Rom '*Mercy and Justice Shall Meet*' was produced. *Mercy and Justice Shall Meet* uses a narrative approach with the telling of eight key stories. These stories are case studies drawn from different parts of the Mercy world.



MERCY

and

JUSTICE SHALL

MEET

A theological reflection process underpins and accompanies the stories which are opened up in the interactive section for reflection, critique and analysis.

Canonisation



In 2003, MIA formally established an interest in the Canonization Process of Catherine McAuley.

The actual canonical responsibility for this process rests with the Irish Congregation since Catherine's birthplace is Ireland. Brenda Dolphin from the Irish Congregation serves as Postulator for the cause of Catherine's canonization, but Vice Postulators from around the Mercy world were named to support this work. Mercy World E-News provides weekly bulletins related to

the Cause of Catherine's Canonisation. From many walks of life and from many parts of the globe, people whose lives have been touched by the story of Catherine have been expressing a wish that she be recognised as a saint. The growing list of people who are willing to make known that they turn to Catherine in their need is a great encouragement.

Biography of Catherine McAuley

A final activity of MIA is the commissioning of a Biography of Catherine McAuley. In 2006, Mary Sullivan was appointed to undertake this work, and she is now nearing completion of the biography, which is eagerly awaited by many of us. She hopes to have it published in 2011.



*Mary Sullivan R.S.M.
Writing an authorised
biography of
Catherine McAuley*

International Mercy Gatherings

International Mercy *Gatherings* were made possible by the Association.

MIA facilitated International Gatherings of Mercy from 1996 onwards – and the Gatherings included the Justice Network, Archives personnel, Leadership teams, Formation personnel, and multi-cultural groupings of new members.

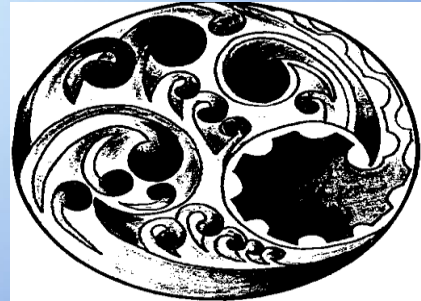


Celebrating Catherine McAuley, Dublin 2006

New Vision

Faced with the question *‘What is God calling us to at the beginning of the third millennium?’* MIA members in 2006 began a process of visioning in the light of a decade of International Mercy experience. They discerned the following:

“If you were to see Mercy International Centre as the well-spring of Mercy International Association, how would you re-vision MIA into the future?”



As 2006 moved into 2007, it became very evident that this sacred space in the heart of Dublin was calling MIA to mobilise global Mercy energy to address the cries of the poor. With 17 years experience of being a catalyst for international action, the Association Members articulated a vision which they believed expresses the urgency of today’s call:

The vision anchors itself in the Mercy wellspring – God’s compassionate Mercy- and it emphasises that Catherine’s founding vision must find expression today in ways that are creative and contemporary expressions of the works of Mercy

GOD'S GRACIOUS *and* COMPASSIONATE MERCY *is the* WELLSPRING, *the* SOURCE *of* NEVER FAILING SUPPLY, *for all* THOSE WHO CHERISH *and* SEEK *to* LIVE OUT THIS GIFT *of* MERCY.



CATHERINE MCAULEY, FOUNDRRESS *of the* SISTERS *of* MERCY, USED HER INHERITANCE *in* SERVICE *of the* NEEDS *of* HER TIME. TODAY, SISTERS *of* MERCY, THROUGH MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, USE THEIR RESOURCES *to* RESPOND *to* ISSUES *of* GLOBAL POVERTY DEMONSTRATED *in the* MASSIVE DISPLACEMENT *of* PERSONS WORLDWIDE.



The HOUSE BUILT *by* CATHERINE *to* CONNECT THOSE WHO WERE RICH *with* THOSE WHO WERE POOR FORMS PART *of* MERCY INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, *a* PLACE *of* RICH HERITAGE *and* HOSPITALITY.



To INTEGRATE *the* ACTIVITIES *of* MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION *and in* SERVICE *of the* MISSION *of* MERCY TODAY, MERCY INTERNATIONAL CENTRE *is* EXPANDED *to* OFFER *a* DIVERSITY *of* PROGRAMMES, ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH EFFORTS, *and* APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION *and* CONFERENCE FACILITIES.



This VISION KEEPS ALIVE *the* FOUNDING SPIRIT *of* CATHERINE AMONG PEOPLES *of* *the* WORLD MOST *in* NEED *of* GOD'S COMPASSION *and* MERCY.

The Vision emphasises the centrality of MIC

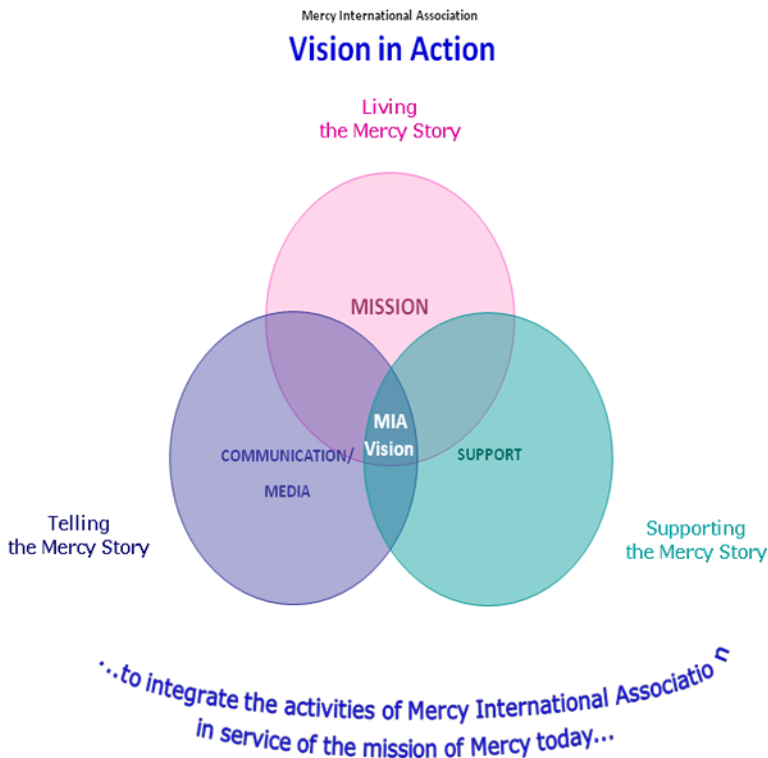
...To integrate the activities of Mercy International Association and in service of the mission of Mercy today, Mercy International Centre is expanded to offer a diversity of programmes, enhanced communications, outreach efforts, and appropriate accommodation and conference facilities.



This vision keeps alive the founding spirit of Catherine among peoples of the world most in need of God's compassion and mercy.

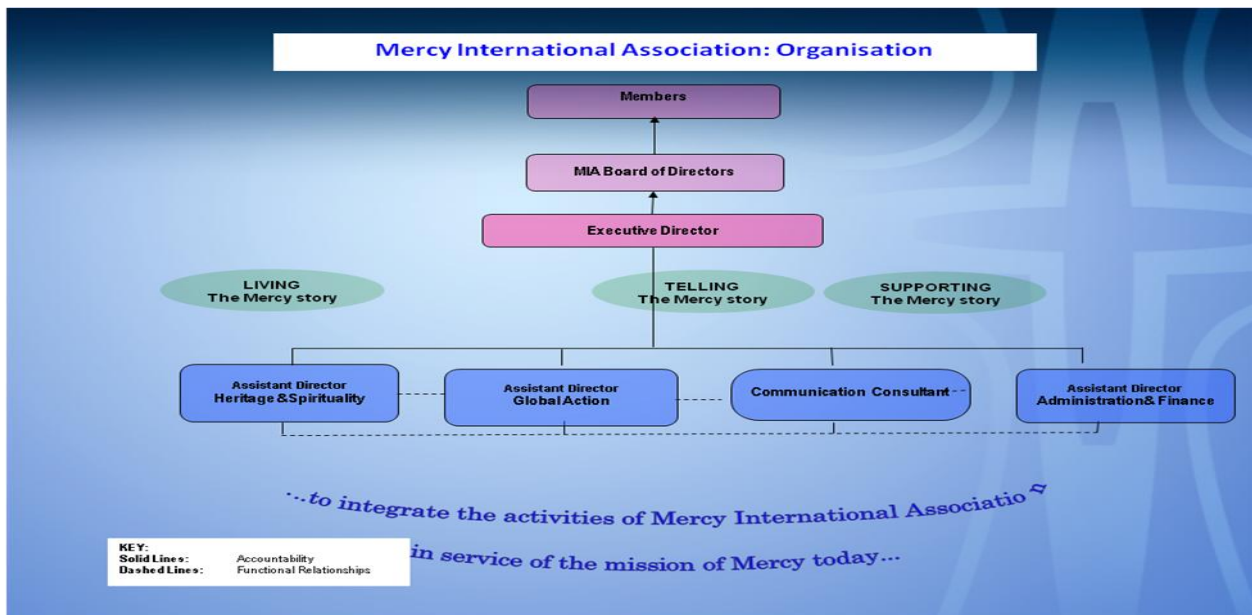
Inspired by the daring vision, the Congregation (Ireland) has made available the adjoining building, Catherine McAuley Centre, so that there is enhanced space to bring the vision to life.

Vision in Action



In August 2007, Members gathered in Burlingame to look at the organisational implications of this new direction. Visually they saw the Vision expressed as Living, Telling and Supporting the Mercy Story in a way that integrates all the current activities of MIA and draws them into an outward looking focus towards those most in need of God’s Mercy and Compassion

The Diagram below shows this in an organisational form



Mercy Beyond Borders

MIA Members believe that Mercy International Association has the capacity to take people *beyond the borders* which ring-fence our customary works of Mercy and to call them to the possibilities of seeing, judging and acting together in the light of the global realities of today's poverty.

...beyond
all
borders...

At the moment, there are approximately 9,000 Sisters of Mercy worldwide and they are present in 47 countries of the world. In the history of the Sisters of mercy about 53,000 women have joined the various congregations around the world



