



MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

FOUNDATION DAY

*'If this is my work, the sooner it falls to the ground the better.
If it is God's work, it needs no one.'*

Opening Prayer, Coming to Stillness

from Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table by Madeline Duckett rsm

Beyond the action of my life with its calls and demands I dwell for a moment at the heart of stillness...and listen...Can you not feel the movement within? The impulse to become more than you are? Can you not sense the ought-not-to-be of the needless pain of the world reaching out. Curling around your heart? Can you allow Love to enter you...the primal energy within all things, drawing you forward...drawing everything forward to that which is to come? I feel...I sense...I allow... **Amen.**

Boundary Breaking: Then and Now

Mary Ignatia Neumann, ed., The Letters of Catherine McAuley

There was nothing straightforward about the founding of the Sisters of Mercy on 12th December 1831. It involved difficult decisions for all concerned. For Catherine, it involved letting go of her original vision of what the House of Mercy could be. Not only was Catherine willing to break societal and religious boundaries in this regard, she was also willing to let God break through her own ideas of where the boundaries lay and lead her to a place she could never have imagined. Catherine knew this was not something she could do alone. Prayer was a vital and dynamic element of everything she did.

'We find her in an amazing act of daring: she made her first foundation with only one professed Sister and a novice! ...but even more daring was the trust that enabled Catherine to hand over to Marianne [Doyle] the responsibility of forming the novice, and the three postulants who immediately joined them. This is a powerful example of the freedom of soul that was Catherine's, the absolute lack of personal ambition or pride, for she had such confidence in Marianne, and in God's guidance, that she handed over to her, and to each of the Superiors of the fourteen foundations made in her lifetime, complete autonomy, not only in the administration of the new foundation, but in the safeguarding and handing-on of the true Mercy spirit.'

Meditative Moment

How does this letting go of preconceptions, which was an integral part of the founding of Mercy, continue to be a part of who we are today?

Reflection

The Luminous Ordinary by Brenda Pettigrew rsm

Catherine's '...messages to the women who joined her in her beginnings of the sisterhood of Mercy ... are as relevant today as they were then. Many of the structures that evolved during her time, structures that supported our communities and ministries for two centuries are now beginning to dissolve, which is another word for transformation.... A thread of Catherine's presence in its most supportive form - personal relationship and consistent encouragement - still leaps and glows from the nearly two hundred plus letters, responses to her letters from others, and sacred documents we are blessed to have... She was personal, affectionate to individuals; no detail is too small for her to notice and affirm. And though there are many letters of business and money worries and all that goes into setting up new foundations - underlining them all - that luminous thread of ordinary affection is the ground of how Mercy came into being.'

Meditative Moment

Tender Courage by M. Joanna Regan rsm & Isabelle Keiss rsm

Where are you feeling called to transformation?

How is the luminous thread of ordinary affection present in your Mercy ministry?

Whatever would foster the relief of the poor found a ready response in Catherine, creating a flexibility in her practices which no doubt was a factor influencing the spread of the Institute. Convinced of the action of God in her life and in the life of the Institute, Catherine resisted only those accommodations that would change the nature of the Institute of Mercy. She felt it imperative to be faithful to the call she had received. Without fail, she remained open to whatever promoted the good works of the institute which in her vision could, with great flexibility, accommodate within its mission different persons, different life experiences, and the needs of different localities.

To Ponder

What helps you to continue to be faithful to the call you have received?

How are we being called to accommodate 'difference' within our mission of Mercy today?

Poem: A Psalm of New Wine Skins

from Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim, by Edward Hayes

Comfortable and well worn are my daily paths
whose edges have grown grey
with constant use.

My daily speech is a collection of old words
worn down at the heels
by repeated use.

My language and deeds, addicted to habit,
prefer the taste of old wine,
the feel of weathered skin.

Come, O you who are ever-new,
wrap my heart in new skin,
ever flexible to be reformed by your Spirit.
Set my feet to fresh paths this day:
inspire me to speak original and life-giving words
and to creatively give shape to the new.
Come and teach me how to dance with delight
whenever you send a new melody my way.

Meditative Moment

What 'new melody' has God been sending your way recently?

How are you being invited to 'creatively give shape to the new' in Mercy?

Closing Blessing

A Baggot Street Suite by Mary Wickham rsm

As we bring our time of prayer on Foundation Day to a close, we think of the blessings that have emanated from the House on Baggot Street for almost two centuries and we pray that we too may be blessed.

'May the blessings of this house -
A house
Imagined in unlikeliness,
Dreamt with daring,
Built with love,
Founded on mercy -
Speak to your Spirit
In whatever room in the world you are reading,
In whatever place you are called to mercy.'

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? Isaiah 43:19