

THOUGHTS ON THE YEAR OF MERCY

What a blessing this Year of Mercy has been for individuals and groups within the Catholic Church during the last twelve months. How inspired was Pope Francis when he challenged us to live mercy in our daily lives.

Early in the year I was approached by the Sunraysia Regional Council to conduct a day of reflection on the Year of Mercy. I did my best to answer this challenge by extra reading and reflection on Mercy using many texts which have become available in recent times. Although I have been a Sister of Mercy for more than fifty years I find there are always new insights to be gained from various sources.

A book I find helpful was titled *Mercy* by Cardinal Kasper as well as the following:

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| Joan Chittister: | <i>God's tender Mercy – reflections on forgiveness</i> |
| Veronica Lawson: | <i>The Blessing of Mercy – Biblical Perspectives</i> |
| Pope Francis: | <i>The Church of Mercy – a vision for the Church</i> |
| Mark P Shea: | <i>The Work of Mercy - being the Hands & Heart of Christ</i> |

and the letter from the Pope titled *Misericordiae Vultus*.

As well as reflecting on the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy (7 in number) we now have Pope Francis urging us to seriously consider an eighth work of mercy.

"As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires 'simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness' and 'makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.'"

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a '**grateful contemplation of God's world**' which 'allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.'"

Throughout the year many people have been privileged to take part in the **Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP)**. As a key activity for this important year, the Mercy International Association is inviting Sisters and partners in Mercy to participate in a worldwide international reflection process that will seek to answer the profound call of exploring Mercy anew with a particular focus on 'the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor'.

Groups of Sisters of Mercy, associates and partners in ministry around the world, have been meeting on a regular basis to discuss issues of concern about the cry of the poor in our society and the cry of the earth and then we have set about re-educating ourselves about what is required to answer the challenges facing our human and environmental challenges facing our world.

Another excellent support to think about Mercy in our times was to participate in the E-Conference, organised by Broken Bay Diocese in September.

As an additional extra I participated recently in an in-service at St Joseph's College Mildura where Mercy was the theme. One keynote speaker, Sr Maryanne Loughry rsm challenged us to respond in a merciful way to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. A second keynote speaker, Sr Therese Power rsm challenged us to respond in a merciful way to the problem of trafficking whether it be of people for labour or sex, or child labour in countries which provide our chocolate and cotton.



A third speaker, Ian Smith spoke of his experiences of being merciful as he administers an indigenous school in the Tiwi Islands.

Fr Damian Styles also gave us helpful knowledge about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Moral Injury which causes so much distress for service personnel in our armed forces.

I really think it is important for each one of us in our daily lives to respond in a merciful manner to all whom we meet in our homes, our work places and our sporting and leisure activities. The Pope urges us to be merciful to one person at a time.

The foundress of the Sisters of Mercy wrote,

"There are things which the poor prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing. Among these are the kind word, the gentle compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows."

What a different place our world would be if we all lived by these words, and those of the Pope who says Mercy is an open book – it is our task to write it by our words and actions.

Sr Rosemary Graham rsm



Photos:

Top: L-R Sr Rosemary Graham, Sr Maryanne Loughry, Jean-Paul Birama, Sr Therese Power, Sr Caroline Coyle

Bottom: L-R Sr Maryanne Loughry, Mrs Marg Blythman, Principal St Joseph's College, Sr Therese Power, Jean-Paul Birama, Joy, Mr Ian Smith, Principal Tiwi College, Fr Damian Styles