



AMSSA

Australasian Mercy Secondary Schools Association

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NEWSLETTER 04/07 OCTOBER 2007

Welcome to the AMSSA Newsletter.

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A MESSAGE FROM AMSSA PRESIDENT, JANE HOLLOWAY

As we enter into a new phase with our new name, new committee and new focus areas let us always remember the woman because of whom we exist. Catherine McAuley was a woman ahead of her time. She challenged accepted societal structures and beliefs. She was innovative and collaborative. Let us too follow in her footsteps. Our challenge is not only for ourselves but also for our students. We need to challenge and question and seek justice.

We need to work together for the betterment of ourselves and society. We need Mercy schools to be shining lights leading from the front through our innovation as we continue the history and traditions of Catherine McAuley.

This organisation and this newsletter can be vehicles of collaboration, highlighting issues and sharing innovation.

We wish you all the best for the rest of the year and a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Jane Holloway

Jane's contact details are:

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MERCY IN ACTION - 9th BIENNIAL AMSSA CONFERENCE 2007

The Conference

All Hallows School Brisbane welcomed one hundred and twenty delegates from Mercy schools across Papua New Guinea, Samoa, New Zealand and Australia. Also among the guests was Anne Kelleher, The CEO of the newly formed Catholic Education Irish Schools Trust (CEIST), the trustee body for the schools of five religious congregations including Mercy schools.

Sr Anne Hetherington, in opening the conference on behalf of the Brisbane Mercy Sisters, reflected that Catherine McAuley and the Mercy women who began education in our part of the globe, all saw education as a practical solution to help women break out of a cycle of poverty and its accompanying threat of moral danger. This Mercy "usefulness" is the fruit of contemplation and reaches out to others in compassion. It is the inheritance for Mercy educators today as we live it in our own lives and offer it to the students who look to us as models of Mercy in Action. Briannon Stevens, a recent ex-student of All Hallows, spoke about this example of her teachers and how her experience of volunteer work while a student gave her the foundation of her present commitment to the homeless in Brisbane. "I hope you rejuvenate at this conference", she said. "Your work is important. It does make a difference and extends into the adult lives of your students, as it has done for me".

In the conference presentations and activities there was ample scope for rejuvenation. The students from All Hallows and St Saviour's Toowoomba gave creative expression to all that is good in educating

through their hospitality and their musical and dance performances, and the All Hallows chorale assisted at the conference liturgy. The conference prayers and Eucharistic liturgy were deep expressions and experiences for us as Mercy educators, and the Eucharist included Margery Jackman's reflection on the Beatitudes.

Keynote presentations

International guests Sister Carol Rittner and Sister Deirdre Mullan, from Mercy Global Concern, which represents Mercy International at the United Nations, both affirmed and challenged Mercy education as Mercy in Action in the present local and global context. That primary education is still not available to so many children in the world is a reproach to us all, as was their overview of the halting progress towards the U.N. Millennium Development goals. Carol and Deirdre both conducted workshops at the conference and gave us many informal chances to tap into their vision and vantage point as educators.

Professor Erica McWilliam, from Queensland University of Technology, teased out what high equity schooling might be in this conceptual age. This was both an affirmation of teachers and a challenge to adapt to the new world of young people, to make good use of our discomfort and lack of knowledge and to find out more about how students go about learning. Sister Adele Howard took us into the world of Web 2.0 technology, into the new social networking places our students inhabit. What Mercy Action is needed as we respond to this, colonise it ourselves, and use it for our own educational and relational purposes and responsibilities? Sister Jan Gray tapped into biblical and theological themes to consider a spirituality for Mercy educators, and gave us some contemporary musical expressions of hope and of mercy.

Workshops and ministry visits

The conference workshops were hands-on times: for follow-up on the presentations, and for looking at Mercy in action in the schools: what is possible in developing young Mercy leaders, in the use of IT, in developing our own educating community. Along with Carol, Deirdre and Adele, a number of Mercy educators and students from among the Association schools ran the workshops.

The Brisbane Mercy Sisters welcomed us to their ministries in the area. We visited the Mater Hospital Health Services and Medical Research Institute, the Romero Center, the Mercy Heritage Centre, and the Mercy Disability, Aged Care and Family Services. In meeting an

extraordinary group of dedicated professionals supported by the Mercy Sisters to live out Mercy in Action, we reflected on how this support might be better co-ordinated throughout the Mercy schools in our Association.

Thanks

Thanks go to the All Hallows School community, to Lee-Anne Perry and the Conference Committee, to the All Hallows Canteen Staff, whose hospitality was superb, and to Conference sponsor, Catholics Church Insurances.

We received messages of support from Sr Leonie Martin, (Parramatta Mercy), and from Sr Anne Hannon, the Vice-Postulator for Europe and Africa (for the canonization cause of Catherine McAuley). Anne's message was as follows: *Best wishes for the success of your ninth Biennial Congress. Our prayers are with you as you discern and plan for the future. May Catherine be close to each of you as you work in her name.*

Biennial General Meeting

The Biennial General Meeting was held during proceedings and Jane Holloway, from St Catherine's College Kilburnie, was elected president. In accordance with the Association Statement of Purpose and By-Laws, the members of the 2007-9 Executive were locally nominated/elected as follows:

New South Wales: Kitty Guerin, OLMC Parramatta

New Zealand: Kathleen Deady, Carmel College Auckland

Queensland: Kathleen Park, St Patrick's Townsville

South Australia: Christine Simpson, St Aloysius' Adelaide

Victoria/Tasmania: Sr Mary Moloney, Academy of Mary Immaculate

Western Australia: Loretta Wholley, Santa Maria Attadale.

It is hoped that the 10th Biennial Association Conference, in 2009, will be held in Perth.

Conference materials posted on Website

The texts and graphics of the presentations are being posted on our website as we receive the final versions from the presenters.

Conference evaluations

Thanks to all who took the trouble to fill in the conference evaluation – almost half of participants managed to do this before rushing off to the airport to catch afternoon flights, and the Executive is most grateful

for the comments and suggestions you made. We hope to plan for the next conference in light of them, as well as from of the feedback you gave us informally during the conference.

- The conference format was overwhelmingly affirmed
- The Opening Ceremony, which really set the tone and theme for the rest of the days, was missed by some and this was a disadvantage
- Those who could send a group from their school found it even more enriching being able to share with immediate colleagues
- The question about what the Sisters might be able to do with regard to the schools, in addition to the biennial conference, was noted by Sr Ailsa McKinnon, who attended the conference as the representative of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy on Australia.
- There were, regretfully, a few minor glitches with the online registration for workshops
- Times for interaction at the end of keynote presentations would be helpful in future.

INSTITUTE OF SISTERS OF MERCY AUSTRALIA

WORLD YOUTH DAY COORDINATOR

ANN-MARIE HERD

MERCY SCHOOLS WORLD YOUTH DAY UPDATE October 2007

Planning for the Mercy Conference on the 14th July 2008 at Monte Sant' Angelo is well under way. Thank you to those who have already expressed an interest in attending. However it would be good to hear from any other schools or communities that would like to be involved in our conference.

I sent all Mercy schools by email the details of the program last week. Please note that we will need to limit the number of participants at our Mercy Conference to 800 – so make sure you have responded to my email with your group's details.

The problems with the email address have now been rectified and contact using the following email address should be easier:
schoolswyd@mercy.org.au

When contacting me I am keen to know how many students would be attending from your organisation. Furthermore if you are affiliated with anyone from overseas and you are intending to bring them to Sydney for WYD and in turn will the Mercy Conference, I would love to have as many details as possible.

If there are any questions about either the conference or WYD just let me know and I will do my best to address any questions raised.

A reminder that if you intend to be involved in the WYD activities from the 15th – 20th of July that you register at the official youth day website
<http://egeria.wyd2008.org/>

When registering please indicate that you are from a Mercy school/Community. The hope is that all Mercy Schools will be accommodated together in one location – but more information on this will not be available until March 2008.

Ann- Marie Herd
Mercy Schools World Youth Day Coordinator.

FEATURE ARTICLE – MERCY IN ACTION AT ALL HALLOWS’ – from Rosalie Toner

The proof of love is deed. (Catherine Mc Auley)

The purpose of Mercy action at All Hallows’ is to conscientize our students (who are female and the majority of whom live a comfortable life), staff and families, about those who live less fortunate lives. “If you are born a woman you are less likely to have an education, less likely to have a secure job, more likely to be a refugee and more likely to be poor.” (QzSpirit Caritas Australia). Journeying towards solidarity with the poor is a faith journey, a commitment to Jesus’ edict to love one another and to recognise that all life on earth is interconnected and therefore interdependent. Given this, then the onus on Christian educators is to inspire and encourage our young people to work for and with the poor. Albert Nolan O.P. in a short paper published some

years ago, *The Service of the Poor*, identified four stages in the journey towards the final stage solidarity with the poor: compassion, discovering that poverty is a structural problem, discovering the strength of the poor, and solidarity. Our aim at All Hallows' is to guide our young women on the journey towards solidarity with the poor both through the curriculum and in the Mercy ministries we offer at school. Through our curriculum we can unpack the structural issues which lead to many living in poverty; and through outreach give them exposure to the lived reality of the marginalised

Young women educated in the Mercy tradition are fortunate to have such a wonderful role model in Catherine McAuley who like many of our students was born into a family of comfortable means. Catherine's compassion for the plight of servant girls came to fruition when she established Baggot Street where she lived in solidarity with the poor.

There is no doubt about the generosity of our All Hallows' community both in time given and the financial assistance provided to the marginalised in our society. There are two major ways in which students put Catherine's words into action, financial assistance through voluntary donations and fundraising and being part of a school group which visits the poor or helps in some way or a group which focuses on awareness raising.

Financial Assistance

All Hallows' pastoral care is organised through a House system with seven Home Groups in each house. At the beginning of the year each Home Group nominates from a specific list, a charity which they will sponsor through weekly voluntary mission and justice donations. In addition, some Home Groups organise a lunch time fund raising event to increase their contributions. Each House also takes on a large project for the year; projects include both Mercy charities here and overseas as well as other worthy causes.

School Justice Groups

The various groups are organised by teachers as part of their extra curricular contribution which is voluntary and honorary. Such groups include: Amnesty International; The Environment Committee; The Ecumenical Coffee Brigade; The Mater Hospital Mural Group- painting murals in the children's ward; weekly visits to old people at a local old people's home; serving dinner to homeless people at OZcare. In addition, students opt to assist with annual events such as Jeans for Genes, Pink Ribbon Day, Bow tie Day, SVDP winter and Christmas appeals, the Easter egg appeal, shoe boxes of love which contained

toiletries for the poor and the annual walk for Friends of Brain Injured Children (FOBIC). Each House has a Year 12 Social Justice Captain. This group meets weekly with the Deputy Principal Mission and plan for the year a variety of both fundraising and awareness raising activities which is mixture of local and global issues. This year the Social Justice Captains are assisted by the newly formed Justice Group. Together these students have promoted Caritas, Harmony Day, World Refugee Day, Indigenous issues and Domestic Violence Awareness.

Many of the abovementioned groups operate from Years 8-12. Mercy in Action in the Middle school is spear-headed by the Social Justice Care Group which consists of twelve students. Again the preferred modus operandi is financial assistance to the poor and awareness-raising among the students. Each year the students undertake a major project such as "*Comfort For Kids*", the aim of which is to provide practical assistance for homeless youth aged between 14 and 19 years. Students are asked to donate items for backpacks which are distributed by Rosies Youth Mission. Items include toiletries, underwear, socks etc.

Parent Involvement

While our main focus is on encouraging staff and students to be involved in service, the parents of All Hallows' are also involved in assisting with those in need. One of the roles of the executive of The Ladies Committee is pastoral care. When an All Hallows' family is in need, due to some unfortunate and unforeseen situation, the pastoral care member organises other families to provide meals for the family affected. Also on Introduction to all Hallows' Day and Orientation Day the P& F organise a sausage sizzle, the funds from which go towards a charity.

As I review the wide variety of activities in which our community is involved, I am confident that the All Hallows' community is faithful to Catherine McAuley's edict:

It is for God we serve the poor and not thanks.

AN ADVENT PRAYER

(Adapted from Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy)

Greeting:

Guide us, O God, to merciful ways, and empower us to bring our prayers to you.

Reading: Philippians 3:20b-21

We are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Intercessions

As we wait to celebrate the feast of Christmas, let us draw close to the Spirit of Christ, our source of light and knowledge.

As people of mercy, we seek compassion for ourselves and those whom we serve:

- *Christ our Saviour, show us the way to serve you in mercy.*

As lovers and guardians of our planet earth, we pray:

- *God our Creator, give us awareness of the beauty of the earth, and strengthen our resolve to care for it.*

As educators, we seek to lead others to the truth through our teaching:

- *Spirit of Wisdom, keep us close to you, the fountain of truth.*

As seekers of justice, we cry out against the pain and suffering inflicted by the forces of greed and corruption:

- *Jesus, the voice of justice, give us the courage to raise our voices for those who cannot speak.*

As people who have seen a great Light, we long for your presence:

- *Christ our Light, be with us always.*

Prayer

Loving God, you sent your Son Jesus to earth to fulfill the promises of long ago. Be with us as we unite ourselves with the longings of your people through countless ages. May we one day be conformed to the blessed image of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

May God's blessing be upon us; may God's light lead us in the way of righteousness; and may our lives be patterned on Christ Jesus.

RESOURCE - CATHERINE McAULEY BANNER

This banner, designed by Gael O'Leary rsm, has been produced in response to many queries from Mercy Schools and Institutions who wish to proclaim their Mercy heritage and to honour our foundress Catherine McAuley.

In the attachment to this newsletter are photos of the banners, which are printed on Polypropylene gloss non-rip film. The strip across the top and bottom of the banner can be either in red earth or forest green.

The banner comes in two sizes, 915mm x 2000 mm (3'x 6'7") and 490 mm x 1066 mm (1'7" x 3'1"). They are also available on a high quality canvas.

A hanger set is available as an optional extra. The hangers are in low-gloss polished aluminium, finished with two eyelets at the top hanger for fixing of the banner. Both top and bottom hangers have a felt insert.

The sizes and costs (ex postage) are as follows:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. | Size: 915mm x 2000mm (3'x 6'7") | |
| | POLYPROPYLENE gloss non-rip film | AUD\$250 + GST (USD\$220) |
| | CANVAS | AUD\$480 + GST (USD\$420) |
| | Hangers: 925mm (3'1") | AUD \$70 + GST (USD\$ 60) |
| B. | Size: 490mm x 1066 mm (1'7 x 3'6") | |
| | POLYPROPYLENE gloss non-rip film | AUD\$120 + GST (USD \$105) |
| | CANVAS | AUD\$250 + GST (USD \$220) |
| | Hangers: 500mm (1'8") | AUD \$40 + GST (USD \$36) |

To place an order for a Catherine McAuley Banner email mersculp@bigpond.net.au .

Payment to be made upon receipt of invoice.

RESOURCE - CATHERINE McAULEY MEDALLION

In a second email today I will send you a flyer from Genemarie Beegan rsm. She offers it as being of interest to the schools in the southern hemisphere in planning for graduation events. The Catherine McAuley medals available are perfect for continuing the connection of young women of Mercy with their alma maters. If you think that this would be a good resource for your schools, please contact her as per the details she provides.

She is receiving orders for large numbers of medals from Australian Congregations of Mercy and can have larger shipments delivered direct from the factory.

Her details are:
Genemarie Beegan, RSM
gbeegan@mac.com