



# AMSSA

AUSTRALASIAN MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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## AMSSA Mercy Conference Reflections – Perth 2011

*from Mary Crowley & Averyl Mitchell, All Hallows' School*

This year was the first time students were invited to be part of the biennial Mercy Secondary Schools Association Conference and we were privileged to be asked to represent All Hallows' School at this three day Conference in Perth. Hosted by Santa Maria boarding school, the



Conference was a fantastic opportunity to further understand and develop our knowledge of Mercy ethos.

Students lived at the boarding house in Santa Maria College, and this gave us a unique opportunity to get to know students from all over Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. For us meeting the two girls from Mercy College Yarapos held a special meaning as All Hallows' had already formed close ties with this school including fund raising for a new Health Centre at Mercy College and representatives from the two schools attending World Youth Day in Sydney together.

At the Conference we chose from a selection of workshops, and also worked with local indigenous elders on a mural to celebrate the theme of Living Mercy. We used group work to present to the adults our interpretation of issues of injustice in our society. I selected a workshop by Margery Jackman who I later found out previously taught here at All Hallows School. It was a most interesting and engaging workshop, about the history of women in the church. She addressed some big issues like how we as young women are expected to treat others equally and justly in the face of inequities within many parts of our institutions and society. What she had to say had an impact on me and resonated with the mercy values we are taught at school about the importance of standing up against injustice and challenging ignorance – something the Mercy sisters have also done. I would recommend Year 10s to seriously consider putting yourself forward for this trip next year. It was amazing.





To say the least, the schedule was hectic and fun filled. We travelled by boat down the Swan River as excerpts from Sr Ursula Frayne's letters to Sisters back in Ireland were read aloud to us. We visited Fremantle jail at night time and were reminded that the focus of Mercy works has always been to help the marginalised maintain dignity and hope. The Mercy workshop I attended was *'Where would desperation drive you?'* It was presented by a Mercy sister who has worked in Papua New Guinea for years. This talk focused on the lives of incarcerated women in remote areas, revealing that in most cases it had been the desperation of their circumstance that had driven them to commit their crimes. The Sisters also brought forward the plight of child labour in PNG, where young boys are expected to carry enormous loads for very little pay. It astounded me that Papua New Guinea, one of Australia's closest neighbours, still suffers from many of the problems that are unimaginable here, in Australia. The Mercy Conference was both an enriching and an enjoyable experience, one which I highly recommend to all future Year 11's. It gave us time out to reflect, interact and realise that with a Mercy education comes the expectation and privilege of giving back to the community in practical ways while being guided by mercy values of kindness, forgiveness and gratitude.

Mary Crowley & Averyl Mitchell, All Hallows' School



## **Pilgrimage for Young Mercy Leaders to Dublin and World Youth Day, Madrid 2011**

*from Thea Smith, Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy*



In August, Tess Roberts and I, accompanied by Sr. Mary and Mr. Hyland were privileged to go on a pilgrimage to Ireland and Spain. In Dublin we attended a Young Mercy Leadership Conference. In Madrid we took part in World Youth Day. We went as a group of 27 students and teachers from Mercy schools around Victoria. The 30 hour flight to Dublin at least gave us an opportunity to get to know each other!

Upon arrival, we had a few days of sightseeing. We went to Trinity College and saw the book of Kells; an amazing manuscript that has survived centuries of turmoil in Ireland. We saw St. Patrick's Cathedral, a play at the Abbey Theatre and also visited sites to learn about the history of Ireland. We took a day trip to Glendalough in County Wicklow. It is the site where St. Kevin founded his monastery. It was beautiful, steeped in history and allowed us to appreciate the saying that Ireland is the land of 40 shades of green.

The Young Mercy Leadership Conference was Sr. Mary's inspirational idea. It grew to become an international event for young people from Mercy schools and universities from New Zealand, America, England, Ireland and of course our group from Australia. The conference was a huge highlight of the trip. We were involved in workshops, history tours and talent shows. The values of Mercy including a sense of justice, compassion and kind acts were reflected in the activities and the spirit of the conference participants with whom we made many good friends.



Tess and I learnt about Catherine McAuley and our Mercy heritage. It made us think about it in new ways and realise how much of an impact Catherine still has on us today. Did you know that Catherine McAuley created the Mercy Order? In 1831 becoming a nun was the only way she could fully do the work she wanted, helping people. She sacrificed a lot and had to overcome and break a lot of barriers at the time, which really shows her passion for giving. I can now see how the nature and spirit of Academy arises out of her vision and hard work. The conference prepared us together for the faith filled journey that was still to come at World Youth Day. We have Sr. Mary and her insight and hard work to thank for that.

World Youth Day began for us in the peaceful and beautiful walled city of Avila. Madrid was then a frenzy of activities and sights, heat and church, prayers, reflection and fun. Heat and crowds became the norm, as did singing songs on the metro and in the streets. We needed the siestas and tapas to revitalise ourselves. We saw Pope Benedict in his Popemobile and at the overnight Vigil attended by 2 million people. This was the main event. We slept out under the stars and braved a thunderstorm in order to attend the mass celebrated by Pope Benedict. This was a very special experience.

We also attended many other World Youth Day events in Madrid that allowed us to explore and celebrate the Catholic faith with young people from around the world. Before our long journey home we went on a 2 day retreat to Salamanca.

World Youth Day is indescribable. People ask, "How was it?" and I'm still lost for words. It evoked a sense of fulfillment, unity and joy. It's just something you have to experience.

The next World Youth Day is in 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. If you can, go for it!

***Thea Smith***





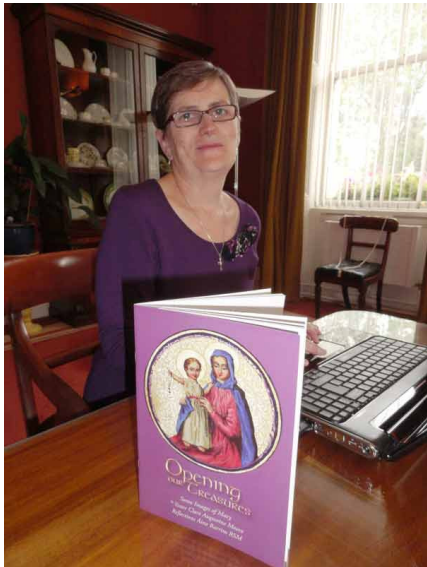
Catherine McAuley could have been insulated and isolated against the miserable poverty of Dublin. Instead she recognized the call of the Spirit, and accepted it with a grateful love and willingness to put it at the service of others. As recipient of God's mercy, she saw herself as steward. Gifts given were gifts for others. Direct and practical in her response, she went out into gutter and garret to teach, to soothe and to shelter. She had discovered that her charism, her gift for others, was mercy, a charism to the cutting edge of brokenness or imbalance.

Giving outward expression to this inner grace, with a singularly keen eye for the special needs of her time and an astute perception of the methods by which they could be successfully met, she quickly attracted others drawn by a similar call to respond to the action of God in their lives.

*Joanna Regan and Isabella Keiss, **Tender Courage***

## Resources available from Mercy International Centre:

### *Opening our Treasures, by Aine Barrins rsm (from E News 28 Sept 2011)*



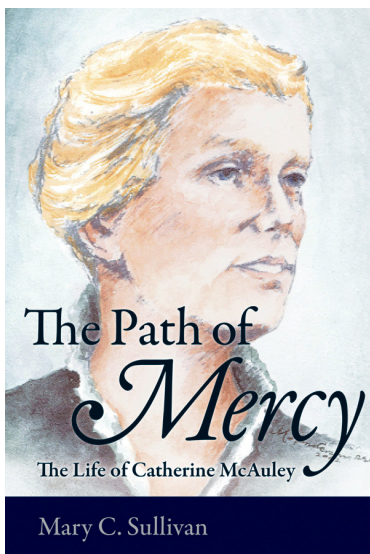
This small booklet has artworks taken from the illuminated work of Sister Clare Augustine Moore. Aine has added to each of the thirteen artworks a reflection of her own, followed by two reflective questions.

Individuals or small groups might take a different theme each time and use the questions as a springboard. While the images are traditionally religious, the accompanying text and questions have a more universal appeal.

Clare Augustine Moore entered the Baggot Street community in 1837 and 'her artistic talents were employed in preparing an illuminated Register ... (for) the Dublin community, and later, an illuminated copy of the rule' (See **Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy**, pp 193,194.) She also wrote one of the first biographies of Catherine McAuley.

**You can purchase copies of the booklet from Mercy International Centre for 7euros each plus postage. (The postage on 4 copies of the booklet would be approx. 5 euros.)**

### ***You can pre-order your copy of the forthcoming biography of Catherine McAuley by Mary C Sullivan rsm***



Four Courts Press, Dublin and Catholic University of America Press are co-publishers of this work which illumines Catherine's personality and details her life.

**In Australia and New Zealand**, orders can be placed with the Catholic University of America Press (in US Dollars), at the address given on that form.

These order forms are for pre-publication orders (and offer sizeable discounts) and the book will not be delivered until early 2012, possibly February or March. Catholic University of America is also giving a good discount on the previously published *Correspondence of Catherine McAuley* (2004).

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