

New website 'puts Mercy in your pocket'

Ngā mihi atawhai - greetings to all in mercy! If Catherine McAuley were alive today, would she be using Skype to keep in touch with the 14 houses she helped to found throughout Ireland and England? And would she be encouraging her young friends and novices to keep in touch with her through Facebook? The answer is almost certainly yes. The founder was quick to take advantage of new technology, admiring the way trains could slice hours off slower, more tedious means of transport.

Leaders in our Mercy world have noted a reversing of the trend, from the epic journeys made from Ireland by our first founders to carry the Mercy story to the ends of the earth, to the pilgrimages that many now make to Baggot Street, sharing their experience and stories with others from around the globe. Based in the house which Catherine built, Mercy International Association today challenges Sisters of Mercy to 'use their resources to respond to issues of global poverty, demonstrated in the massive displacement of persons worldwide' (MIA vision statement 2007).

It's the worldwide web of internet and email which enables Sisters of Mercy and their partners in mission to keep in touch, to feel the pulse of Mercy in action, and to channel their prayerful, practical energies into a collective response to our wounded and suffering world. Over recent months, Sisters of Mercy in this country have been in the process of updating and improving their website; the new version is expected to be launched in the coming weeks.

Developed in consultation with the Melbourne-based multi-media agency Fraynetwork (named after Irish-born Mother Ursula Frayne who led the first Mercy sisters to Australia in 1845), the new website is unmistakably Kiwi, with images and logos which link it firmly to Aotearoa New Zealand and to our own sisters' bicultural commitment. Patricia Rowe rsm, who coordinates Te Pae Tukutuku, the Congregation's website communications group, says the new site has been built around the current chapter state-

Mercy in a cybernetic world

E Te Atua, hau taiao,
Breath of the cosmos:
in the beginning was your Word,
the true light that shines in the dark,
full of grace and truth, promising life to all.
We give heartfelt thanks for
this digital age of ours,
when news travels at the speed of light,
across divides that have kept peoples apart,
allowing the light of truth to shine
where dark and ignorance once ruled.
May our worldwide webs of news
help to shed the brightness of your light,
bringing freedom and justice
to wherever your mercy waits to reach.
Through the gifts of global technology
may our virtual dreams become reality,
as our hearts beat more in tune with yours.

*Produced for He Waka Tiaki Mission Team,
Auckland © November 2012*



BOOKMARK: Copies of this bookmark, showing the address of the updated website of the Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, and the smart-phone QR code in the lower right-hand corner, are being distributed to students at Mercy colleges throughout New Zealand and Samoa, and to staff of many Mercy ministries.

Imaging Mercy Today

ment, identifying Sisters of Mercy as 'centred on God, impelled to be Mercy, keeping hope alive in our world today.'

She notes that technology has changed since the Congregation launched its first website and updated it in 2007. "Today we're able to use audio and video material to tell our story," she says. "This is a user-centred site, allowing people to connect with Mercy at work and to become engaged." The website group has produced a bookmark which bears a smart-phone QR (quick response) code. "This puts Mercy in your pocket," says Patricia Rowe. "It offers Mercy access 'on the move' to users of smart-phone technology, especially by the younger, internet-savvy generation." QR codes are a key to communicating today, "and have the power to greatly expand our reach."

The new website is a window on our Mercy world. In the forefront are the ministries begun by Sisters of Mercy throughout New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga, many of them maintained today by lay staff and volunteers. But there are strong links, too, with Mercy International and its centre at the United Nations, Mercy Global Action. Katrina Fabish rsm, who deals with communications on the Congregation's Leadership Team, notes how local stories can connect with the global issues. She cites this year's Rio conference on climate change as a case in point. If the website had been up and running earlier this year, local stories could have been used to strengthen Mercy's voice at the United Nations, "We relate to others and resource them by celebrating the Mercy charism we share, expressed and lived locally," says Katrina Fabish.

She says the bookmarks will be distributed to every pupil in our Mercy schools and will be available to others involved in Mercy ministries, throughout New Zealand and the Pacific. "Those with an iPhone may have a permanent link, and keep connected through Facebook. We'll be exploring strategies for getting news from our ministries uploaded. Local events may support the global issues."

Katrina Fabish hopes that the new website will let Mercy people tell their story, here and now, with their own distinctive lens on the world. "This will offer others a chance to glimpse 'the mercy of God' at its deepest level, in the context of our time and place, with an opportunity to respond and contribute in some real way." - Dennis Horton