

Nga Kuaha o te Atawhai – Doors of Mercy opening anew

*Celebrating
166 years
of Mercy in
Aotearoa
New Zealand*



Sisters of Mercy and their companions are gathering in Auckland this weekend to mark the 166th anniversary of the arrival of the first Sisters of Mercy in Aotearoa on April 9, 1850. They were led on their eight-month voyage half-way around the world by Mother Cecilia Maher (pictured) who recalled later that it was a journey 'that no one would make, except for God.'

Within four decades, other Mercy foundations were established in Wellington, Hokitika (and later in Christchurch) and Dunedin. The pattern in each centre was the same: a long journey to a site unseen, with few resources beyond a deep faith in God and a willingness to serve the poor wherever they were found and whatever their need. The tradition the Sisters carried from Catherine McAuley, their foundress, was to open doors of Mercy in the best way they could, dividing what they had to share with those who had less.

In this Year of Mercy, we are being invited to draw inspiration from our founding Sisters throughout Aotearoa, working and praying that their example will endure in our willingness to open Mercy's doors in our day.

He Inoi: Prayer

Opening doors of Mercy anew

E Te Atua hoa hikoi,
God, companion on our journey:
in this Year of Mercy,
help us to recognise the doors waiting for us to open
so that your mercy may reach out to those in need.

May our memories of what Mercy has achieved in the past
not prevent your plans from continuing to unfold,
but rather open us to future possibilities
and fire us anew as we seek fresh ways
to transform our world.

Impel us to join Pope Francis
in caring for Papatuanuku, our common home,
protecting our Earth and its fragile resources.
Teach us to discover the worth of each living thing,
to see how we are united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

May the wairua of Mother Cecilia Maher
and our other Mercy founders inspire us today,
not to do what they did then,
but to be where they would be
if they were here, standing in our shoes now. Amen.

Waiata:

Our hymn, with words by Bishop Pompallier who led Mother Cecilia Maher and her companions to New Zealand, honours Mary, whose 'yes' to God's call made her the mother of Jesus and of all humanity.

Mo Maria aianei
o tatou waiata,
kia kaha ra tatou
kia nui te aroha.
(repeat verse as refrain)

*For Mary now
we sing together,
asking that our love
remain strong.*

Aroha ki te Atua
aroha ki a Maria
i te rangi i te whenua
ake tonu, ake tonu.
(repeat refrain)

*Let love for God
and love for Mary
be in heaven and
earth for evermore.*