

# Mercy NZ's vision grounded in te whenua

Nga mihi atawhai - greetings to all in Mercy! As Chapter 2014 concludes and a newly elected Leadership team prepares to guide Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa into the next five years, a new resource has been published to guide Sisters of Mercy and their partners in ministry on Mercy's unfolding path. Entitled *Atawhai Mai Atawhai Atu – Mercy Given Mercy Received*, the 32-page booklet has been published in New Zealand with original art-work by Māori artist Henriata Nicholas that gives it an unmistakably local flavour.

The cover features a coastland in colours and shape evocative of our land, and the outline of a braided river that winds its way throughout the booklet. The Māori motif at the base of each page reflects the essence of Papatūānuku, say its authors; 'the koru represents growth, development, change and momentum.' The winding flow links 'whanau, aroha and environment' as one.

The resource has been produced by a team that includes four Sisters of Mercy (Katrina Fabish, Patricia Rowe, Cheryl Connelly and the late Ethel Bignell) and lay mission advisor Cathy Harrison. Copies have been distributed to all Sisters of Mercy, and to the members of Mercy boards. Plans are to distribute copies more widely among Mercy's ministries, especially where groups can join to reflect together on the material the resource contains.

Emerging early in the booklet is the charism of Mercy's founder Catherine McAuley, whose 'walking sisters' went in search of Dublin's needy 'in a way that was not typical for religious sisters of the time.' In her response to the traditional works of mercy, Catherine is described as 'innovative, collaborative and highly professional.' She was born 'to make a difference', say the authors, and Mercy people continue to be called to do the same.

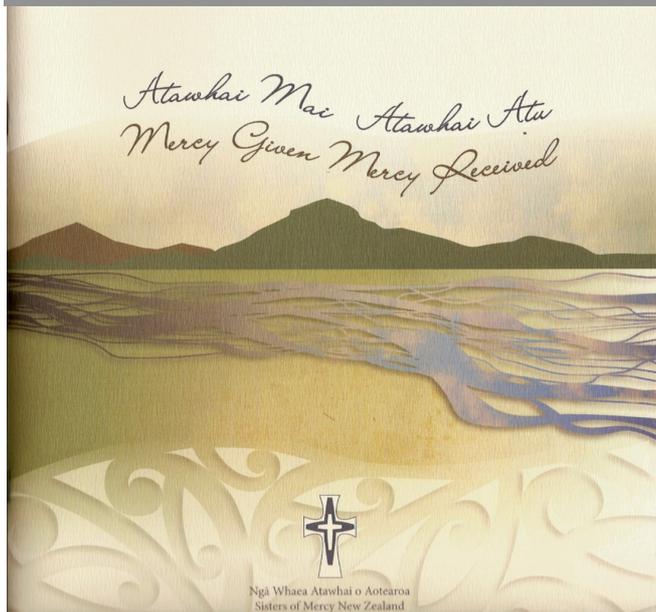
As a technique for 'doing Mercy' the authors propose an M theory, a Mercy process for decision-making. This involves engaging the questions, listening deeply to the heart, receiving insights, crafting the new, testing the waters. Described in the text and outlined in more detail among some resource tools slipped into a pocket in the booklet's back cover, M theory 'is an invitation to live

E te Atua Atawhai,  
God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,  
Creator, innovator, risk-taker:  
let our holding to traditions we cherish  
not prevent your plan from unfolding.

May our memories of what has been  
open us to future possibilities  
as we seek new ways of being Mercy in our world.

May Catherine's original vision  
and the wairua of our 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.

## Imaging Mercy Today



FRONT cover of *Atawhai Mai Atawhai Atu*, designed by Māori artist Henriata Nicholas and depicting New Zealand's coastline and braided rivers. Mercy's vision is shaped 'particularly by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the cry of Papatūānuku Earth,' say its authors.

through change creatively. As in Aotearoa's breath-taking rivers and fiords... the letter M clearly reflects the rise and fall, the ebb and flow of our own life journeys.'

Like a camel standing before the 'eye of a needle', Mercy people must be ready to drop the unnecessary baggage acquired on the journey in order to move forward. 'What baggage do we need to leave behind? How serious are we about crafting the new?' A gospel response means that we are 'being opened by hope, not closed by fear.' The authors quote anthropologist Margaret Mead who advised, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.'

The vision of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa is shaped particularly 'by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the cry of Papatūānuku Earth', the book notes. The call requires a shift in perspective, 'from being guardians of inherited structures and ways of working, to becoming creators of new patterns of involvement; from simply preserving what has been handed down, to enhancing today's ministries for tomorrow's mission.'

Being faithful to Catherine's charism commits us to 'transformative action, responsive to the emerging needs of today's society.' Mercy's core values, beautifully articulated in the pages of this resource, can guide that response; so can Mercy symbols like Catherine's homemade boots and her woollen shawl, in which the new-born baby of a dead cholera victim was wrapped and taken home.

The dream which inspires this resource is, at its deepest level, God's own dream for humanity. It takes flesh in te whenua, the land in which we are blessed to live. May Mercy be the fragrance we help to spread through our land, as we bravely engage the questions and risk moving towards the dream! Tihei mauri ora! - Dennis Horton