

Imaging Mercy Today

Counsel for doubtful - no creep-mice here

Ngā mihi atawhai - greetings to all in mercy! With this month's reflection, on 'counselling the doubtful', our series moves from the corporal to the spiritual works of mercy. The challenge for the next six months will be to keep lofty aims firmly grounded, aware of Catherine's call to fit people "for earth, without unfitting them for heaven."

Mercy's foundress is remembered famously for taking one of her new communities to task for not being braver. "Poor Naas is like the little chicken that belongs to the clutch called 'creepy crawly', she complained. "I wish it would make a start." At the heart of her desire to make a difference to people's lives was her deep trust in providence, and she sometimes expected those who shared her dream to go out on a limb to make it come true.

Catherine had a skill for tapping people on the shoulder, letting them know that she thought they could be leaders of the new enterprises she launched. She provided on-the-job training for those she put in charge, staying with them for a month or more, until they were ready to stand on their own feet.

She was very good at modelling the kind of behaviour she expected from others. She avoided making all the decisions, leaving it to them to decide what to do, after she had pointed out matters needing their attention. Her talent was for setting up new foundations, not branch houses dependent on Baggot Street. She knew that when it comes to doing mercy, local solutions are usually the best.

In our Mercy world, counselling the doubtful takes many forms today. Spiritual direction and companionship is a min-

Growing in grace

E te Atua, Kaiwhakamana,
God of enabling grace:
in your all-embracing love
you call every one of us
to stand and grow tall.
Because each of us
is made in your image,
we share your mana.
Your glory is seen best
when we are fully alive.

Be at the heart of our lives,
in the families we form,
the communities we create,
the ministries we share.
Let us affirm one another
in our living and our loving.
May our belief in others
help them to become
the people you call them to be,
in mercy's name. Amen



MERCY TODAY: On Matariki Day at Carmel College, volunteer tutor TeRangi Hogg demonstrates flax weaving to Tuakana Leader, Tori Rickard (left), and Year 13 student Le Toya Ah Lam. Senior girls later shared their skills with younger pupils at the lunchtime event.

istry provided by trained staff at Mercy spirituality centres in Auckland and Christchurch, offering group retreats and one-to-one guidance for those seeking to discern God's presence in their lives. In Hokitika, a Sister of Mercy is in practice as an experienced psychologist, enabling clients with limited resources to access her services.

Staff of our community development centres seek to make a difference for women whose lives have been overshadowed by domestic violence and abuse, by lack of educational and financial opportunity. Te mana whakahaere is the goal – making dreams come true by restoring mana and self-confidence, enabling women to move beyond their doubts to stand tall once more, as they find for themselves and their families a future to hope in.

The same process is under way through the Tuakana mentoring programme now in place in two of our Mercy colleges, where Māori staff and students are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills. A deeper understanding of tikanga Māori is enabling them to see how the treasures they hold can enrich other cultures as well.

By assuming leadership roles in many of our ministries, women have pushed through the glass ceiling with roles that would have delighted the heart of Catherine McAuley, in so many ways a woman ahead of her time. She made decisions that in her day were mostly made by men – buying property, instructing architects and buildings, conferring with clergy and civic leaders.

If ever doubtful about where Mercy needs to go, we do well to hear Catherine scolding Tullamore for 'being such creep-mouses', but giving three cheers to see Carlow stepping up to the plate. - Dennis Horton

Mercy's window on the world

By CATHY SOLANO rsm
Mercy Works Inc (Australia)

In 2000, close to 200 world leaders dared to dream that the suffering of billions brought about by extreme poverty, disease and illiteracy, especially among women, could be alleviated by 2015.

Those leaders signed the Millennium Declaration which was translated into a road map setting out eight goals, known as the MDGs.

Progress has been made, but UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon points out that the weakened world economy and steep rises in food prices threaten to reverse some of the gains already won.

"Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice," says Ban Ki-moon, "all our goals—peace, security, sustainable development—stand in jeopardy."

Women in developing countries face incredible barriers to the liberation for which Ban Ki-moon hopes. Most of the world's poor are women; they perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the world's food, but earn 10% of the income and own 1% of the property.

Two-thirds of people who are illiterate are female; a majority of the millions of children not at school are girls. Today,

In September, world leaders will meet in New York to assess their progress on the UN's Millennium Development Goals, aimed at halving world poverty by 2015. A crucial factor in reaching that target, writes Cathy Solano rsm, in last month's issue of Mercy Works' magazine *The Bilum*, is by empowering women and promoting gender equality.



HIV-AIDS is rapidly becoming a woman's disease.

Yet studies show that when women are empowered and allowed to thrive, society benefits. Families are healthier, more children go to school, agricultural produc-

tion improves and incomes increase.

Catherine McAuley understood clearly the links between the lack of progress in society and the role of women in furthering its development. Long before the world leaders of 2000 dreamed their dream, Catherine had put a similar vision into practice.

The 'House of Mercy' she built in 1827 would alleviate the suffering of some of Dublin's poorest women and children. She took in young women and girls and taught them skills so they could fend for themselves. She taught the children of the poorer classes, because she understood that education was the only real way of lifting people out of poverty.

In 2010, *Mercy Works* is continuing Catherine's vision by supporting initiatives that alleviate the suffering of people, especially women, in some of the world's most impoverished communities.

We believe that by promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, we will go a long way to reducing poverty for the whole community.

When world leaders gather later this year in New York to renew their commitment to the MDGs, they need our collective support. Everyone must work together to make these goals become a reality. We can do it—let's make poverty history!

Korero Māori - kia kaha ake: give it a go!

Staff at Mercy Hospice Auckland are meeting informally during the month of Mātāriki for kai and korero.

Led by Waka Atawhai, a group of Māori staff, the weekly sessions are a chance for others to hone their skills in te reo Māori.

Meanwhile, a recently formed kapa haka group at St Mary's College in Ponsonby is preparing to lead a lunch-time event to mark the start of Te Wiki o te Reo Māori on Monday 26 July.

These are just two examples of how local Mercy organizations are working to show their commitment to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to acknowledge the unique place of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It's 11 years since Pou Atawhai, the mission team of Mercy Ministries, published its booklet *Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Mercy*, recommending bi-cultural practices for Treaty-based organizations.

A section of that booklet highlights the importance of honouring te Reo Māori, quoting a well-known proverb: 'Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro tāua, pērā i



HE KŌRERO KAI: 'E kui, kua pau te pata!'
'Kei te nui nga tomato—homai te parāoa.'
'Nan, there's no more butter.' 'There are lots of tomatoes—pass the bread.'

(Photo from *Kōrero Māori*)

te ngaro o te moa' - 'if the language be lost, we will all be lost, as dead as the moa.'

In seeking to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the booklet notes, Mercy ministries recognise the Māori language as unique, spoken nowhere else in the world, and part of a rich heritage and culture that is also unique.

"In many ways, te Reo embodies Māori spirituality, with its emphasis on holistic thinking, family relationships and the spiritual dimension of all living things.

"Mercy ministries view te Reo Māori as one of the taonga which Te Tiriti seeks to protect and enhance. Its use is especially appropriate on any formal occasion when guests are welcomed, when significant anniversaries are remembered, or when key events are celebrated."

The booklet states Mercy's policy of naming all major documents and publications in both Māori and English. "As a way of honouring te Reo, the Māori name usually comes first."

Meanwhile, the Māori Language Commission has settled on a food theme for this year's celebration of Te Wiki o te Reo. Aiming to promote and widen the use of Māori within the community, the Commission has chosen as the 2010 theme 'Te Mahi Kai' - the language of food.

"This means not just partaking in a meal, but all the activity that goes to create that meal. This can include hunting and fishing, as well as shopping, through to food preparation in the kitchen."

A phrase book, *Te Mahi Kai—the language of food*, is available with other resources for Te Wiki o Te Reo from the Commission's website, www.koreromaori.co.nz