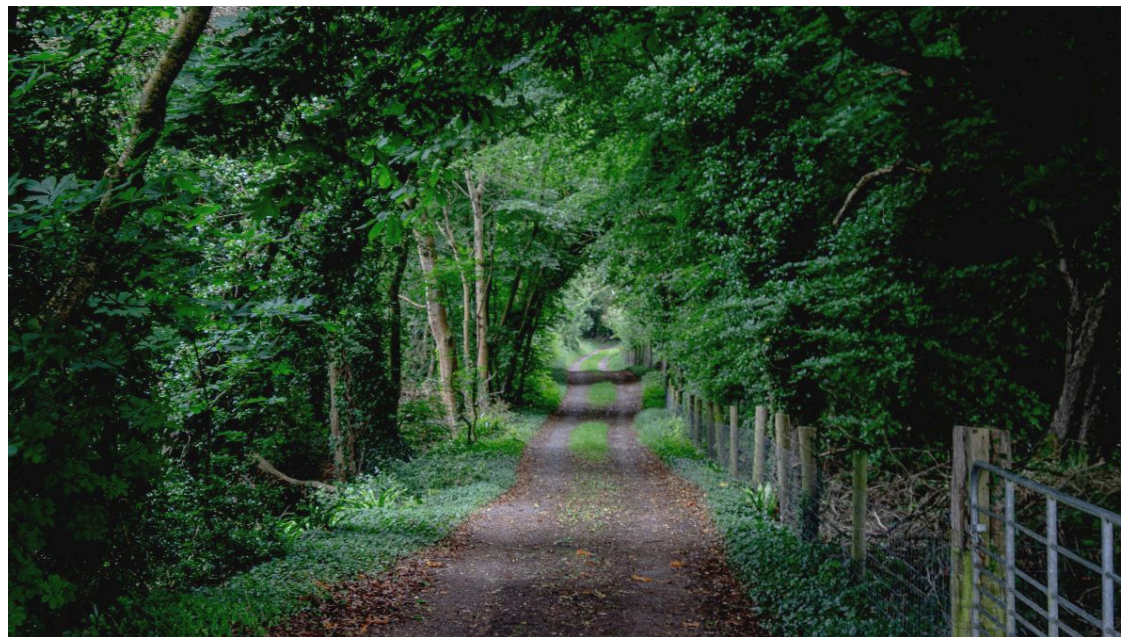




June 2025



### **Pilgrimage – From Personal to Communal**

**Iyla Davies, Trustee Director**

When you have spent most of your life trying to be faithful to a charism, it can begin to stagnate. The traditions become second nature and may begin to lose their shine and colour. Patty Fawcner SGS warns of the need for a charism to 'evolve, develop and flourish'. On a personal level, my recent pilgrimage to our founder's homeland allowed me to rejuvenate my passion for Mercy and to discover new charism

insights.

I had spent most of my life focussing on Catherine McAuley as founder. It is often said of Catherine 'that she broke through the impossibility of her day', although I was reminded that she was not alone on this journey. My pilgrimage opened a whole new awareness of the importance to the charism of two of her fellow Sisters and good friends, Mary Ann Doyle and Vincent Ellen Whitty.

I learnt that both women were so different in talents, skills and personality to Catherine. In summary, Mary Ann Doyle was known to be quiet, timid and cautious while having a vivid story-telling ability; and Ellen Vincent Whitty is remembered for her initiative, organisational ability and advocacy skills...

[Read more](#)

#### **Mercy Ministry Companions**

#### **Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage (MLPDP)**

This year's MLPDP participants will gather again on 23 and 24 July in Melbourne for the final Module of their program. In addition to Lyla Davies' Reflection above, we are delighted to share three other pilgrims' experiences of Module 2 from their time at Mercy International Centre in Dublin from 27 April – 3 May.



### **Intergenerational participation in the Dublin Pilgrimage**

**Daniela Paradiso, Property Manager, Mercy Ministry Companions**

A Sister of Mercy recently described the Dublin pilgrimage to me as *transformative*. Her words were: “*No one ever comes back from Dublin the same.*” She was absolutely right.

This year, I had the privilege of being invited to join the Mercy Leadership Program Dublin Pilgrimage, along with 23 other pilgrims. The formation program is an immersive experience – one that invites participants to step into the story of Catherine McAuley, to listen deeply to her journey, to understand her mission and vision, and to walk the streets of Dublin through a Mercy lens.

It was also an opportunity for us, as leaders within the Mercy organisation, to challenge our thinking about leadership and to better understand our roles within the mission. Throughout the pilgrimage, we were invited to reflect deeply on how Catherine McAuley’s legacy could shape our own leadership practices and we were encouraged to carry the spirit of Mercy back into our workplaces. But perhaps the most enriching part of the pilgrimage was the time spent with incredible colleagues – learning, sharing, collaborating, and forming lasting friendships.

What made this experience even more special for me was that my mum and I are the first multi-generational participants in the MLPDP – albeit 20 years apart. My mum, Maria Rossetti, took part in the

Dublin Pilgrimage in 2005. During her time in Dublin, a papal conclave was held in Rome following the death of Pope John Paul II. On 19 April, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI was elected, and his inauguration Mass was celebrated on 24 April. In a remarkable parallel, just days before the start of the 2025 Dublin Pilgrimage, Pope Francis passed away on 21 April. Many of this year's pilgrims gathered a week later in Dublin to watch and pray during his funeral.

The significance of these events has not been lost on me. I feel deeply blessed to be part of the first multi-generational pilgrimage, and to know that both my mum and I embarked on our respective journeys during such pivotal moments in the history of the Catholic Church.



Participants in MLPDP, Dublin 2025.



Participants in Mercy Ethos pilgrimage, Dublin 2005.

## Challenging the status quo with Big Hairy Audacious Goals

*Lauren Semple, Chair, Mercy Hospital Dunedin, New Zealand*

In late April this year, I had the privilege of visiting the first Mercy house at Baggot Street in Dublin. Being at Baggot Street underscored for me Catherine's huge appetite for risk. One cannot help but be impressed by the scale of Baggot Street. From the colonnades to the striking double sized red doors, the property remains as impressive today as it must have been nearly 200 years ago.

What struck me as even more impressive though, was that this large-scale build was completed by a Catholic woman in pre-emancipation Ireland. From the excellent history sessions we received, it was clear that a Catholic man would have had a very difficult time getting a property of this nature built during that period. That Catherine achieved it as a woman is truly remarkable.

Sometimes in business or governance we talk about Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAG). The things that challenge us to change the status quo, put a stick in the spokes and upset the ordinary. I doubt Catherine had ever heard of a BHAG. But that's what she accomplished – a big hairy and very audacious

development project, which would place the poor and vulnerable right in view of the rich and the privileged. It was an undeniable challenge to the status quo, a stick in the spokes of a Dublin establishment that might assist the poor but didn't necessarily want to have to see them. Catherine wanted that changed. She wanted the rich to see the poor and vice versa. She wanted the divide to be reduced – and isn't that as much of a challenge today as it was then? Perhaps more so. It is always tempting to look away from the poor and the vulnerable. To want things to be solved out of sight and preferably by other people. That was not Catherine's approach. That is not our charism as Mercy leaders and supporters.

The Catherine I met at Baggot Street was rebellious, provocative, perhaps at times subversive, a strong, smart woman with a Big Hairy Audacious Goal and I am so grateful to have had the chance to meet her.



### **Pilgrimage to Baggot Street: A journey to Mercy's source**

*Patrick Walsh, Chair of MercyCare Western Australia*

As Chairman of MercyCare WA and an Australian of Irish descent, my recent pilgrimage to Baggot Street in Dublin, the birthplace of the Sisters of Mercy, was a profoundly personal and transformative experience. It was not just a journey to Catherine McAuley's founding house, but a return to my ancestral roots and a reconnection with the heart of a mission that continues to guide my work and values.

Stepping into the Mercy International Centre, walking through the open “red door”, I felt a pious stillness. Walking the very halls where Catherine welcomed the poor and the vulnerable, and at the conclusion of the pilgrimage standing praying around her final resting place, one could almost feel her courage and clarity of purpose. This pilgrimage was not only reflective it was also restorative and deeply human.

We were welcomed with extraordinary warmth by Sisters Margaret and Patricia et al, whose gracious hospitality, wit, and genuine openness set the tone for the entire experience. They embodied the spirit of Mercy — not only in words and prayer but in laughter, music, and shared stories over tea.

The pilgrimage was a journey, at times informative and experiential and at other times, it was an opportunity to reflect on the personal reasons I became involved with MercyCare and now the wider Mercy community. It was a challenge to “what we can do and what else can we do?”

Sharing the experience with like-minded people from varying organisations who see Mercy at their core was a wonderful experience. There was enough creative tension to challenge various positions but overwhelming opportunity to reference back to the core of Catherine's mission.



**NAIDOC Week: 6-13 July, 2025**

This year marks 50 years of celebrating NAIDOC Week, honouring and elevating Indigenous voices, culture and resilience. The 2025 theme is *The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy*, chosen by the NAIDOC Week Committee to celebrate "...not only the achievements of the past but also the bright future ahead, empowered by the strength of our young leaders, the vision of our communities, and the legacy of our ancestors."

In your ministry and within your local area, there is likely to be a range of activities which have been organised to celebrate the oldest, continuous living cultures in the world and the achievements of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

Educational resources exploring this year's theme can be found [here](#).

From the Formation Coordinator



### **Mercy Leadership: Empowering Middle Leaders**

From 16-18 June, 12 Middle Leaders from across Mercy Education, Mercy Health and MercyCare gathered at the St John of God Conference Centre at Shoalwater, south of Perth, for Cohort 2 of our 2025 MMC Middle Leaders' Program. The team of Liz Dowling rsm, Carmel Ross, Belinda Cooney and Annette Schneider rsm welcomed them to Part 1 of the four-part Program. Newly appointed Trustee Director, Jennifer Stratton, and MEL Director, John Aldous, joined the group for the Tuesday morning sessions.

Parts 2 and 3 will be delivered via Zoom on 16 October. Participants will gather again for Part 4, a one-day seminar in Perth at St Catherine's House of Hospitality in Tuart Hill.





### **Opening and blessing of Mercy Education's new National Office**

Mercy Education has entered a bold new chapter and reaffirmed its commitment to excellence in Catholic education and to the mission and charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, with the official opening of its new National Office at 289 Wellington Parade South, East Melbourne on 20 June 2025.

The evening brought together esteemed guests including: Fr Michael Buck, who led the Liturgical Celebration and blessing of the new premises; Federal Senator for Victoria, Senator Raff Ciccone, in attendance as a friend of Mercy; representatives from Mercy Ministry Companions Ltd; the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG); Sisters of Mercy; Mercy Education Board Directors; Principals and leaders in Catholic Education; Mercy Ministries such as Mercy Health and MacKillop Family Services; and students from St Aloysius College North Melbourne.

### **Celebrations at St Aloysius College North Melbourne**

In anticipation of the feast of St Aloysius on 21 June, St Aloysius College in North Melbourne held its feast day Mass and celebrations on Monday, 16 June. The chief celebrant was Fr Michael McEntee who spoke about St Aloysius as a role model for young people and also contemporary role models like Blessed Carlo Acutis whom Pope Leo will canonise in September this year. Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Education Ltd CEO Louisa Rennie and MMC Trustee Director Gabrielle McMullen AM joined students and staff for the celebrations. As well as enjoying the festivities of the day, students raised funds for the social justice projects of their respective houses.

### **Mercy Community Services**



**McAuley calls for parishes to put a spotlight on family violence**

Domestic violence remains a pervasive issue in Australia and is still the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Refuges are so full that 'only those most at risk of being killed will get in.'

That is the assessment from Jocelyn Bignold, CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women, which provides accommodation, counselling, and health and financial services for families fleeing domestic violence.

...Following the Royal Commission, the umbrella group Catholic Social Services Victoria, of which McAuley is a member, began investigating ways that faith-based organisations could play a role in combatting domestic violence. 'I think it was really foresightful of the Catholic social services to get in early and start to think about what that means for the parishes,' Jocelyn says.

'I believe it's our responsibility to help the Catholic community understand what's going on—we know the language, we know the context, we have access to the people,' says Jocelyn.

[Read more](#)

### **Mercy Connect launches Spiritual Connections during Reconciliation Week**

This year, Mercy Connect's Reconciliation Week event honoured the theme Bridging Now to Next, and was attended by staff, participants and community members including Sister Carina RSM, MacKillop Family Services and Albury City Council.

Mercy Connect purchased four original canvases, titled Spiritual Connections, which will be mounted and displayed in the Albury office. Each painting is accompanied by reflection questions which have been designed to inspire thoughtful consideration of the pieces and how they relate to Mercy Connect. The artwork invites viewers to reflect on their own connections to heritage, the significance of spirituality in daily life, and the importance of honouring those who came before us. Each brushstroke tells a story, celebrating the richness of culture and the enduring strength of community.

[Learn more about these artworks](#)





Mercy Connect's new Spiritual Connections artworks: (L-R) Past, Present, Future, Emerging.

Mercy Health

**Supporting Aboriginal health at Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Navigating the healthcare system can be daunting for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. At Werribee Mercy Hospital, Samantha, a Bunurong/Boonwurrung woman, plays a crucial role as an Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer (AHLO), ensuring culturally safe and patient-centred care.

Samantha has been with Mercy Health for three and a half years, equipped with a Post-Graduate Certificate in Family Therapy and extensive experience in various sectors. Her work focuses on healing intergenerational trauma and advocating for culturally safe partnerships between Aboriginal families and service providers.

“We want you to feel safe and work through whatever is happening for you. We may not get it right every time, but we will keep listening and working it through with you until we do,” says Samantha.

Health disparities are stark. For example, 80 per cent of the mortality gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 35-74 years is due to chronic diseases. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are five times more likely to suffer from diabetes and four times more likely to have chronic kidney disease.

At Mercy Health, we are committed to Closing the Gap by providing culturally safe, compassionate care. Samantha’s work is integral to this mission, helping to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all our patients.





[Learn more about Aboriginal Programs and support](#)

### **Save the Date**

**4pm, Monday 15 Sept -  
5pm, Tuesday 16 Sept**

### **2025 MMC Conference**

***Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne***

The format will be similar to 2024, exploring in more depth our theme of '*Extending Horizons*'. We are very pleased that Angela Scaffidi has accepted the invitation to facilitate our time together.

Further details about the Conference Program and Registration process will be sent to ministries once they are confirmed.

Please share this Mercy Ministry Companions Newsletter with your colleagues and [opt-in for further communications.](#)

*In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Ministry Companions acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the country where we live and work today.*

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