



February 2026



February Reflection: Reimagining the charisms of our founders

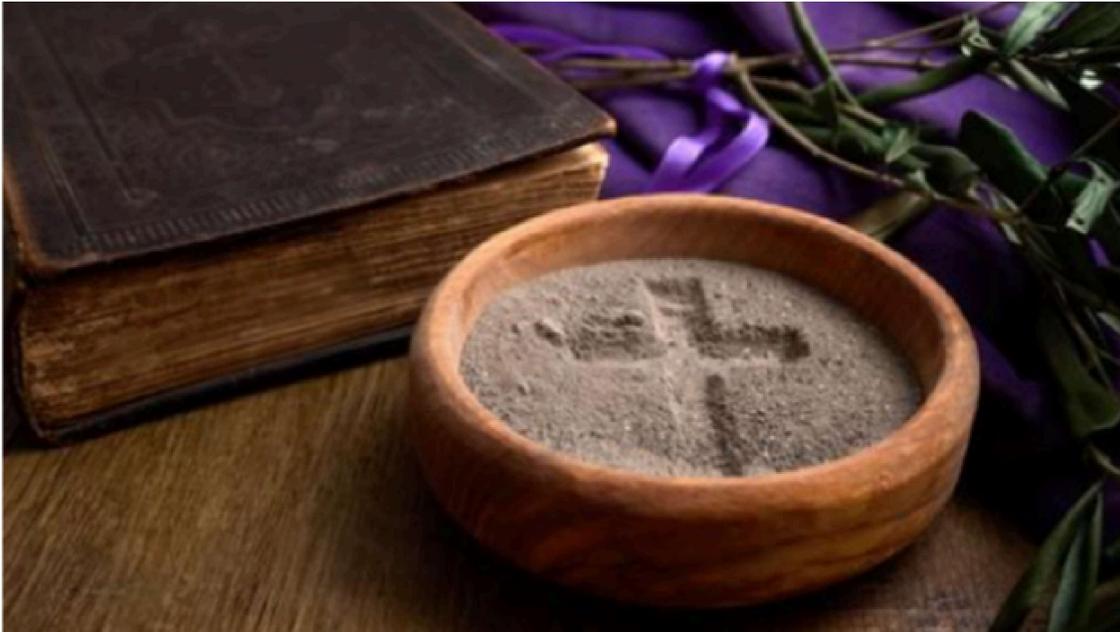
Annette Schneider rsm, MMC Formation Coordinator

Welcome to this first edition of **Connections** for 2026! May the year bring many blessings to all within Mercy Ministry Companions.

In MMC's Identity Statement we are reminded that MMC "*continues the Mercy Tradition, providing Community Service, Education, Health and Aged Care ministries enlivened by the spirit of Catherine McAuley.*" The Statement goes on to say that "*we are open to the voice of the Spirit as we reimagine the charisms of our founders.*"

The acknowledgement and celebration of significant events (often those with a zero attached!) enable us to look back in gratitude, to be attentive to the present and to envision a future born of our fidelity to the mission of Jesus. In the tradition of Catherine McAuley, we give expression to different ways of being women and men of mercy. This Reflection highlights some significant events which have occurred within the past three months.

[Continue reading](#)



The journey of Lent

Lent is a time when we are called to recommit ourselves as Christians through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It does not have to be a burdensome 40 days of preparation for Easter; rather, it is intentional, when we turn our hearts and minds to the inner journey where our spirits are nurtured. There are many ways to pray, to turn our hearts and minds to God. This Lent, Pope Leo is calling us to 'fast' from using words or acting in ways which wound and hurt others. When we give alms or share our resources, we acknowledge our dependence on each other as a faith community.

This year, our Muslim sisters and brothers are observing Ramadan at the same time as Christians are observing the Church's season of Lent. Let us pray for each other as people of faith, that we may be signs of hope, love and peace in our fractured world. Within your ministry, there may be opportunities for people from different faith traditions to come together and to share aspects of faith which are significant for them.

A resource for Lent 2026

The Brisbane Archdiocese has developed a resource, [**The Journey Home**](#), a series of thoughtful and insightful reflections for the season of Lent, written by Archbishop Emeritus Mark Coleridge. It has been developed for use by individuals or small groups where people can gather to share life, faith and to pray with one another. You may wish to invite people to join a group within your ministry. The resource is available in both hard copy and as an e-resource.

[Order The Journey Home - 2026 Lent Resource](#)

Sisters of Mercy celebrate 180 years in Australia

On 8 January 2026, the Sisters of Mercy celebrated the 180th anniversary of their arrival in Australia, with a special Mass in St Mary's Cathedral Perth, led by Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB.

Archbishop Costelloe was joined for the occasion by Vicar General, the Very Rev Fr Vincent Glynn, Geraldton Bishop Michael Morrissey, Archbishop Emeritus Barry Hickey, Cathedral Dean, Rev Dr Sean

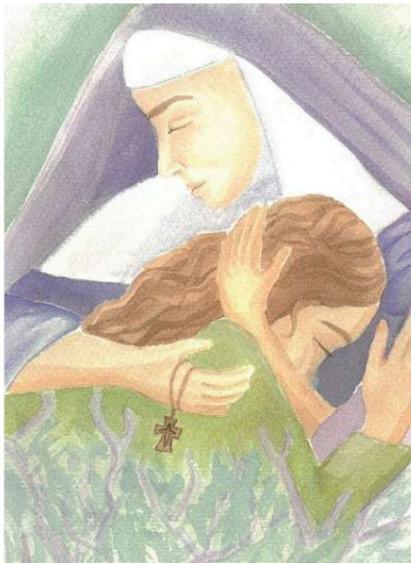
Fernandez, Fr Peter Bianchini as MC and several other clergy from across the Archdiocese.

Hundreds packed St Mary's Cathedral for the anniversary Mass, including the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea Leader, Sr Karon Donnellon RSM, current and past Mercy Sisters, priests, fellow religious, MercyCare and Mercy Ministry Companions representatives, teachers and students past and present, invited guests, and those inspired by the sisters' charism.

In his homily, Archbishop Costelloe said "The Sisters of Mercy are called to be, in a very particular and unmistakable way, living images of God's mercy as it is made known to us in the life, teachings and ministry of Jesus."

Sr Karon Donnellon RSM, Leader of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, said the anniversary was a day of great celebration.

"While the journey over the past 180 years has at times been imperfect, we express gratitude to the women and men who have been inspired by [founder] Catherine McAuley's expression of Mercy to make a positive difference in the lives of others by being a merciful presence in changing times."



Watch the Mass at St Mary's Cathedral in Perth to mark the 180th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia.

Mercy Ministry Companions

MMC celebrates four years with thanksgiving Mass

On 8 December 2025, Mercy Ministry Companions celebrated four years as a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP), with a thanksgiving Mass attended by approximately 50 guests in the Chapel at Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy. The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Terry Curtin and Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR.

As part of the Welcome, three symbols which have become significant for MMC were placed in front of the altar: our MMC Candle, our liturgical Message Stick and our Vision, Mission and Values Statements. Trustee Directors, MMC staff and representatives of MMC's Community Services, Education and Health

and Aged Care ministries led the Readings, music and singing and the Prayers of Intercession.

In his homily, Bishop Terry Curtin drew on the scripture passages chosen for the celebration, reminding us of the variety of gifts we have been given and of the example of Mary, in her generous response to the message of the angel that she was to become the Mother of God.

Following Mass, guests gathered in the College library for morning tea. Thanks was expressed to College Principal, Mary Moloney rsm, and her colleagues for their welcome and hospitality on this special occasion.



NEW OFFICE ADDRESS

We're pleased to share that MMC has moved to our new office at:

**Level 5, 250 Victoria Parade,
East Melbourne.**

Postal address:
PO Box 4205, Fitzroy, Vic 3065



Getting Together at Sacred Heart College Geelong

On 3 December, the 166th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Geelong, Sacred Heart College in Newtown invited sisters and guests to the College for 'A Comfortable Cup of Tea'. The Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC) Trustee Directors were represented by Margaret Bounader, Chair of the Trustee Directors.

The gathering marked the end of an era for a significant building at the College. Mercy House, built in 1963 as Joseph's Hospital and Nursing Home, was subsequently the Newtown Convent of Mercy from 1977-2010 and most recently the College's Mercy House. It is due to be demolished in early 2026 and the December gathering celebrated its history and the contributions of the Sisters of Mercy at the site. Once the site is cleared, new facilities forming part of the Sports and Wellness Precinct will be built. The primary function and purpose of the facility is to provide a variety of spaces for physical activity and spaces that build wellness for learning, as well as a multi-function space for large group gatherings accommodating up to 2,000 people. Sr Kath Tierney rsm gave the occasional address to "honour the story, the ministries and those involved".

The following evening the College community came together again to sing Christmas carols. College students and alumni performed, leading the singing. The festivities were enhanced with market stalls and food vans, one of which was MacKillop Education's Bitter Sweet food van. This collaboration across MMC ministries is to be a regular feature at College events and is warmly encouraged.

[Read Sr Kath's speech](#)



Mercy Schools Celebrate a New School Year

Mercedes College, Perth

On 2 February, MMC Trustee Directors Carmel Ross and Jennifer Stratton attended the Mercedes College Opening Mass at St Mary's Cathedral in Perth. The service was followed by morning tea and the unveiling of a statue of the first student of Mercedes College, which opened on 2 February 1846, exactly 180 years ago to the day.

This statue represents the very first student to walk through the gates on Monday, 2 February 1846 to Sr

Ursula Frayne, to commence her schooling. She now stands on St Joseph's Lawn, her legacy carried forward by the 985 students who fill the campus today. Her presence reminds us that our story is one of growth, faith, and Mercy spirit. We were delighted to welcome the Sisters of Mercy, VIP guests, Mercedes College staff, and selected students to witness this special moment. The statue stands as a symbol of every student—past, present, and future—and of the bravery it took for that very first young girl to take her initial step into a Mercy education

This statue complements the statue of Ursula Frayne installed at the college about 10 years ago.



St Brigid's College, Perth

The following day, Carmel and Jennifer attended the opening Mass at St Brigid's College, Perth. The school boasts a beautiful and unique outdoor natural cathedral in a grove on the school grounds, with tiered seating surrounded by dozens of tall gumtrees. Attendees enjoyed music from the school choir supplemented by birdsong in the surrounding trees. Following Mass, attendees were treated to morning tea. St Brigid's has an annual theme and this year it is based on the Sisters of Mercy being referred to as the 'walking nuns', taking themselves out into the community to serve those in need. Each student will receive a lapel badge of a pair of boots to remind them of the year's theme.



Mercy Community Services



Mercy Connect - Sister Scholastica Scholarship 2025

Mercy Connect proudly offers the Sister Scholastica Scholarship annually. Now in its fifth year, this scholarship is awarded to a female student who demonstrates exceptional potential to thrive in the school environment. It provides financial assistance to help the recipient achieve their fullest potential and engage meaningfully with all aspects of their primary or high school education. The scholarship embodies Sister Scholastica's passion for education and her belief in the transformative power of learning.

Laura Hovar, a Year 12 student completing her final year at Trinity Anglican College, was awarded the 2025 Scholarship for making an exceptional contribution to the school community. A driven and service-oriented leader, she has led major initiatives including the inaugural Trinity Sleepout for homelessness and the Shave for a Cure campaign, which raised nearly \$250,000. Laura also represented and coached across numerous school programs, coordinated whole-school events such as Book Week, and participated in a service trip supporting disadvantaged students in Samoa. Her dedication to community and service has been outstanding, and she is a source of great pride for the school.



Mercy Connect launches Reconciliation Action Plan

Mercy Connect officially launched their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 4 February in Albury, with the event also live streamed to Central West staff. The day was an opportunity to reflect on the work that has gone into developing the RAP and a chance to celebrate the starting point for implementing these important actions and initiatives. Mercy Connect's RAP demonstrates the heartfelt commitment to reconciliation, aligning with the organisation's core values.

Aunty Edna Stewart and Uncle Noel Stewart performed a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony and Mercy Connect's Daniel Quinn performed a moving piece on his didgeridoo. Thank you to all who attended including Mercy Connect Board and Committee members, colleagues from MacKillop Family Services, staff and participants, and local invited guests from Albury City Council and Xavier Catholic College.



MacKillop Leaders Honoured for Outstanding Community Service

MacKillop Family Services is proud to announce that the Chair of the MCSAL Board, Charles Reis, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2026 Australia Day Honours.

“Charles was recognised for his service to the community in a range of roles and organisations, and at MacKillop we are very fortunate to have benefitted from his leadership, skills and values over the two years he has served as Chair,” said CEO Dr Robyn Miller, who was herself appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2025 Australia Day Honours.

Another recipient of an OAM this year was the previous MacKillop Board Chair, Brian Keane, who was at the helm for six years through a time of enormous growth in the organisation.

Mr Reis and Mr Keane join a distinguished group of Australians celebrated for their outstanding contributions to society.

[Continue reading](#)



MacKillop's Stormbird Program supporting regional Victorians

After a devastating Summer season of bushfires and floods in regional Victoria, MacKillop's Stormbird Program is working with children in affected communities, to help them rebuild resilience and wellbeing.

MacKillop's Stormbird Program is an evidence-based, small-group intervention designed to support children and young people impacted by natural disasters. Since its inception, The Program has helped more than 10,000 Australian and New Zealand children and young people, by creating a safe space where children can process their experiences, understand their emotions, and develop strategies to manage worries, stress and change.

[Continue reading](#)

Mercy Health



Mercy Health

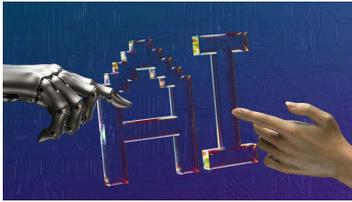
Care first

Mercy Health awarded for HITH program

Werribee Mercy Hospital has won a 2025 Victorian Healthcare Award for its Neonatal and Paediatric Hospital in the Home (HITH) program. The HITH Program model enables babies and children to receive hospital-level treatment safely and effectively in their home environment. The model is delivering significant benefits in Melbourne's west, where rising birth numbers and high demand are pushing services to capacity.

Dr Jye Gard, Paediatrician and Medical Lead of Paediatric and Neonatal HITH services, said "Families tell us every day how much it means to keep their baby at home, and the outcomes are outstanding".

[Continue reading](#)



Mercy Health makes the Call on AI

In early December, Mercy Health became the first Australian health and aged care provider to sign the Rome Call for AI Ethics. The Call, which was first signed in 2020, promotes a shared responsibility to request and develop AI that serves every person and the global community.

Sponsors of the Call aim to work together to promote 'algor-ethics' - the creation and use of AI in a way that is transparent, accountable, impartial, reliable, secure and private, and inclusive. This is particularly important within the healthcare sector, where AI integration is accelerating.

Mercy Health's Chief Information Officer Paul Jurman said healthcare providers must balance the potential of artificial intelligence with this need for regulation and responsible use. "AI is already being used in healthcare to create operational efficiencies, provide research and diagnostic support, and to enhance patient and customer interactions," he said.

[Continue reading](#)

[From the Formation Coordinator](#)

Ongoing formation resources

There are two resources available which can assist staff new to a Mercy ministry and/or new to MMC. Excerpts can form part of a staff Induction program or a staff meeting or other gathering. A link is provided for each resource:

The [**Orientation to Mercy Modules**](#) is a self-paced eight Module Program which enables participants to engage in a range of material, either individually or in a small group, to enhance their knowledge of 'Mercy'. Each Module takes approx. 45 minutes to complete. Educators who complete all eight can apply for Accreditation to CEWA, CESA or MACS.

[**Mercy Ministry Companions: an Introduction**](#) is an updated and renamed version of the former MMC Welcome Pack, first developed by our MMC Mission Coordinators' Network in 2023. Staff new to MMC, or existing staff who are still unsure what a Ministerial Public Juridic Person is and how their ministry is part of MMC, will find this resource very helpful.

[Access the Orientation to Mercy Modules](#)

From the wider Mercy World



Pathways of Mercy project

Pathways of Mercy is an initiative of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) that is exploring how people connected with Mercy can continue to engage, belong, and co-create new expressions of Catherine McAuley's charism into the future.

During the research phase, participants expressed strong alignment around the importance of community, mentoring, formation, and opportunities for connection and collaboration across Mercy networks. ISMAPNG are now moving into the next phase of the project, which focuses on identifying practical and sustainable ways these hopes might take shape — with particular emphasis on developing a proposed inclusive Mercy Network to support connection, formation, leadership, and action.

As part of this work, ISMAPNG are seeking your input through a [**short 5-minute survey**](#).

If this is your first introduction to Pathways of Mercy, [**please see the project overview**](#). You are also welcome to sign up to the mailing list to stay connected with future updates.

[Take the survey now](#)



International Women's Day with Whānau Mercy Ministries

To mark International Women's Day 2026, Whānau Mercy Ministries in Aotearoa New Zealand have organised an online seminar on 9 March featuring Dr Rocio Figueroa, a respected theologian and member of the Mercy Hospice Board. Dr Rocio will speak on Women and Leadership in the Church.

[Register now](#)

Conferences and Events

Save the Date

2026 MMC

CONFERENCE

4pm Wednesday 9 September -
4:30pm Thursday 10 September
2026

@ Catholic Leadership Centre - East Melbourne

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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