

Karanga Atawhai

Karanga Atawhai - The Voice of Whānau Mercy Ministries

May 2025

Reflecting on Ten Years of Laudato Si'



Whanau Mercy Ministries is online. Check it out today by scanning the QR code, or visit: whanaumercy.nz

As we mark the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si', we are reminded that caring for our common home is not an optional extra, it is central to our mission and it is for this reason that Whānau Mercy Ministries have made it one of their strategic goals. Pope Francis challenged us to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, recognising how deeply these cries are intertwined.

At Whānau Mercy Ministries, we have three sources of wisdom that weave together to tautoko our work for Care for the Common Home: the vision and call of Laudato Si', the deep interconnectedness of mātauranga Māori, and the legacy of Catherine McAuley, who responded with practical mercy to the needs of her time. These traditions remind us that our governance must reflect the values we proclaim, for us as an organisation, especially Aroha, Kaitiakitanga and Whakawhanaungatanga in this jubilee year of Hope.

Catherine saw God's providence in all of creation. Her Mercy was active and grounded, alert to context and open to change. As boards, we hold the responsibility to lead with vision and integrity. Laudato Si' offers us a moment to pause and ask: Are we doing all we can?

Pope Francis says, "Ecology, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense."

As we reflect on the significance of Laudato Si' and its call to ecological conversion, we are invited to consider how its message is shaping our own leadership and practice.

The following questions are offered as prompts for personal and collective reflection - challenging us to examine how deeply our values are embedded in our governance, our strategies, and our daily actions.

- *What link do you see between protecting cultural treasures and the broader ecology of Aotearoa? What does that look like in our lives? In our Ministries?*
- How are we integrating ecological sustainability and care for the common home into our strategic decisions and daily operations?
- Do our investments and procurement practices align with the values of Mercy and kaitiakitanga?
- How are we listening to the voices of the poor and the earth in our decision making?
- In what ways can we become a more prophetic presence in our Ministries, leading change rather than reacting to it?



Walking the Mercy Way: Reflections on the MMC Leadership Programme and Dublin Pilgrimage.



What does it mean to walk the Mercy way today? In this reflection, David Mullin shares insights from his recent journey to Dublin and participation in the MMC Leadership Programme—an experience that brought home both the global reach and local responsibility of living out Mercy in Aotearoa.

Participating in the Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC) Leadership Programme and Dublin Pilgrimage has been and continues to be a deeply formative experience—one that continues to shape my understanding of Mercy in action. Gathering with a diverse group from across the Australasian Mercy world, I was struck by the richness of perspectives and the shared commitment to Catherine McAuley’s legacy. It was excellent to be joined by Lauren Semple, Chair of Mercy Hospital Dunedin Limited. The two of us represented Aotearoa well – making sure that we were never outdone by the 20+ Aussies we were on pilgrimage with. If Aotearoa didn’t always get a mention in the presentations, we made sure to contextualise things for our unique context.

The pilgrimage, to Mercy International Centre, Baggot Street, Dublin, offered more than a journey through place with people; it was a journey through and with purpose. Standing in Catherine’s house, I felt the weight and warmth of her vision—a space that continues to gather the Global Mercy Whānau. The phrase, “you are the heirs to Catherine’s will and legacy,” resonated deeply. It is both a gift and a challenge: to carry Mercy forward in our own contexts, with courage and compassion.

Dublin today is vastly different from the city Catherine knew in the 1800s. Yet, the needs she responded to—healthcare, education, and care for the vulnerable—remain universal. What varies is how we express these works locally.

“The programme reaffirmed the strength of Tikanga Mercy - our “superpower” - which grounds and binds us in a uniquely Aotearoa way.”

This was a powerful reminder that Mercy is not static; it adapts, responds, and bridges divides.

The programme reaffirmed the strength of Tikanga Mercy—our “superpower”—which grounds and binds us in a uniquely Aotearoa way. While some aspects of the pilgrimage lacked this grounding, it highlighted how vital it is to carry our cultural identity into global spaces.

At the heart of the week was a simple truth: extraordinary things emerge from ordinary people acting with faith and perseverance. Catherine, the pioneer sisters, and Mercy congregations up to today, faced many challenges and closed doors, yet they persisted. Their legacy of continually opening the Doors of Mercy, as Catherine did nearly 200 years ago, calls us to do the same.

David Mullin

Ko te Hapai O | Executive Director

**Share your stories,
they connect us all.**

We would like to share the stories from your Ministry so we can help build connections and act as a bridge between all our Ministries, please share your stories with any images to: wmm@whanaumercy.nz.

Please forward this newsletter on:

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Meeting Catherine at Baggot Street.

A personal reflection on encountering the spirit of Catherine McAuley in the very place where her bold vision took shape.

In late April this year I had the privilege of visiting the first Mercy house at Baggot Street in Dublin. Many of you reading this will have been and will immediately be transported back to your own response to walking through those red doors for the first time. For those who haven't been, I hope this short reflection will give some insight into my own experience and perhaps prompt your own pilgrimage at some point in the future.

I was fortunate to join a group put together by our counterparts in Australia, Mercy Companions. While being mistaken for an Australian became a constant challenge (!) it was a joy and highlight of the trip to share time with a group of people who are contributing to, and so passionate about, the work being done by Mercy organisations across Australia and New Zealand.

For me, being at Baggot Street underscored Catherine's huge appetite for risk - something our current highly regulated corporate environments (even in the not-for-profit space) are less than conducive to. One cannot help but be impressed by the scale of the house at 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 historical scene setting 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.

New Podcast Episode.

The latest Mercy Echoes Podcast has been released and this one features Ngā Whāea Atawhai o Aotearoa Congregation Leader Sister Denise Fox.

You can find out [more information here](#) with links of where to listen to it.

That Catherine achieved it as a woman is truly remarkable. Having worked in the development sector for many years in New Zealand I am acutely aware that there are still very, very few woman developers - and yet that's what Catherine was at that point - a property developer, directing every last detail of a very significant and very expensive build.

Sometimes in business or governance we talk about Big Hairy Audacious Goals. The things that challenge us to change the status quo, put a stick in the spokes and upset the ordinary. I very much doubt Catherine had ever heard of a BHAG. But that's what she had and 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 did not necessarily want to have to see them. I was reminded that 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.

This was further reinforced to me by a most excellent presentation from Sister Sheila Curran, on our penultimate day in Dublin. Sister Sheila has a PhD in theology and has spent many years working among the poor in Peru. Her challenge rang boldly through the former school room in Baggot Street where our group was assembled - "we can keep helping the poor or we can work to change the structures that keep people poor". Having spent some days in the quiet reflective environment of Catherine's legacy, Sister Sheila's words felt challenging and proactive, perhaps even subversive. Certainly, they seemed to touch some nerves in the room and created quite some heated discussion when we broke. [Click here to continue reading.](#)



Gathered in Mercy, Called by Our Baptism.

Mercy Mission Formation Network Gathering

By Natasha Watson

I recently attended the Mercy Mission Formation Network Gathering at Seville Mercy Centre, themed 'Casting the Net - The Conversion of Processes'. Over 20 people participated, including Sisters of Mercy and colleagues from PJPs and ministries across Australia. It was a time of deep connection and providence, especially as we witnessed the announcement of Pope Leo — someone Susan Pascoe AM had spoken of with hope the day before.

Susan's keynote presentations were a highlight. As a key contributor to the global Synod process, she reflected on Pope Francis' invitation to become a truly listening Church. In Cast the Net – The Conversion of Processes, she reminded us that our baptism is our identity card — a call to step into the future of our Church. Her second session, Implementing the Synod of Synodality in Mercy Ministries, explored how synodal processes — now inclusive of Religious and lay voices, including women — can shape the Church's path forward.

Other sessions included insights from Caroline Thompson, Libby Blom, and Sr Ailsa Mackinnon on the Mercy Partners document The Synodal Way, as well as workshops on ecological Stations of the Cross and the practice of deep listening. I was especially touched by the stories of Sr Meredith Evans' work with refugees in Adelaide and Sr Faye Kelly's reflections from Cairns.

The gathering stirred my own call to mission, especially as Whānau Mercy Ministries begins its journey as the first PJP in Aotearoa New Zealand. I left inspired, carrying with me the richness of shared wisdom, the courage to listen more deeply, and the sense that we are truly gathered in Mercy, each called by our baptism to respond with aroha and courage.

Download prayers & resources at whanaumercy.nz/resources

We're regularly adding new karakia and will soon include downloadable formation resources for use in your hui and gatherings. Scan the QR code to access our resource section - so you'll always have a karakia on hand when you need one.



SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming Gallery Show.

If you are in Wellington between 19th June and 14th September there will be an exhibition of the work of Julia Lynch who was known as Sister Mary Lawrence at the New Zealand Portrait Gallery. You can find out more information here: [Julia B. Lynch: A Dedicated Life — New Zealand Portrait Gallery](#).

Mercy Alliance Webinar : Discernment and decision making in governance and leadership

Mercy Alliance which is a collaboration between the Mercy PJP's in Aotearoa and Australia have organised a formation seminar on June 26 by Phillipa (Pip) McIlroy. It will be by zoom at 3:00 – 4:30 pm NZ time. You are welcome to log on a few minutes beforehand to catch up with colleagues so we can commence on time. [You can find more information and the zoom link here.](#)

Mercy Governance: Finance Essentials Online Workshop.

As part of the Mercy Governance Programme for our Trustees, Ministry Directors and Senior Leaders in our Ministries we are offering a Financial Essentials Workshop which is being funded by Whānau Mercy Ministries. It is worth 8 cpd and will run online beginning Wednesday 4 September to Wednesday 9 October from 5.15PM to 6.30PM. [You can click here to find out more about it, or register scanning the QR code.](#)

