Hearts Caught Off Guard and Blown Open: The Mercy International Reflection Process in Retrospect and Process

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Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions and Mercy Volunteers,

“Light precedes every transition. Whether at the end of a tunnel, through a crack in the door or the flash of an idea, it is always there, heralding a new beginning.”

—Teresa Tsalaky

We write to you on a beautifully light-full and flowering day in May knowing that you will actually be reading this sometime in mid-July. The Chapter experience will be over when you read this, but hopefully the deeper experience and outcome will linger in our hearts far beyond those 10 days.

All of us are in transition having received a new Chapter direction and having elected a new Institute Leadership Team. The five of us who are ending our term are seeing a glowing light beaming through a crack in the door that still stands ajar. The light of gratitude and grace that has led us through these six years—your prayers, your encouragement, your challenges, your engagements, along with your fears, your griefs, your frustrations—were the joys and sorrows mingled that bound us together! Each engagement with you invited us to pay attention to the light of wisdom that you offered and impelled us to be the light of mercy to our suffering world along with you. Thank you!

We resonate with Sister Mary Wickham’s words when she reminds us, “We will not close the Door of Mercy.” It is in our very nature as women and men of Mercy always to keep the door of Mercy open for all who wish to know and be the light. Together with our new leadership, “we will hold the door ajar” as we embrace our Chapter 2017 direction and commit to live more fully our Mercy life.

Blessings to each of you!

In Mercy,

Anne
Pat
Eileen
MaryPat

From the Institute Leadership Team
Community Update

NORTHEAST

Women of Mercy who honored Sister Laureen Fitzgerald include (front row, from left) Sisters Jean Roche, Victoria Battell, Jacqueline Marie Kieslich, Sheila Christensen, Rosemary Sgroi, Marge Halpin and Joyce Ross; (second row, from left) Gail Waring, Barbara Dudley, Helen Charles, Ellen Boyle, Ginny Sposito, Jeanne Conley, and Mary Ann LoGiudice; and (third row, from left) Jane Somerville, Rose Hobs, Pat Newell, Mary Fraser, Kathleen Pritty, Pat Houlihan, Donna Conroy, and Jean McGinty. Credit: Maria College.

ONE SISTER WORKED in a soup kitchen; the other served as a college president. Both women were recently honored for being Mercy.

When New Hampshire’s Sister Eileen Brady retired on March 31 after 24 years as a social worker at the Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter, where she was known for her political advocacy, she made the local news and enjoyed a retirement party at the shelter. Sister Laureen Fitzgerald of Albany, New York, was recognized as president emerita at Maria College on May 3. She had served Maria as vice president, academic dean and president for 38 years before retiring in 2012.

CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA

AT THEIR RECENT assembly, CCASA sisters voted to reduce their Community Leadership Team from four members to three. In May the newly elected Team—Sisters Julie Matthews, Lilian Silva and Angelina Mitre—met with the outgoing members—Masbely Del Cid, Estela Gomez and Patricia Mulderick—to prepare for the July 1 transition. Sister Patricia Mulderick will be moving to Guyana in November to take up her role as novice minister for the Caribbean.

CCASA sisters and associates continue to offer the Quaker-developed program, Alternatives to Violence. Workshops have been held in Argentina, Honduras and Panama for sisters, associates and collaborators. In July the program, led by Sisters Cristina Mira and Blanca Quintana and Associates Monica Maher and Kotty Ramirez, is being offered in Peru.

Inspired by the success of last year’s CCASA volunteer program in Colón, Panama, applications are being accepted for the next opportunity. Duration and location will be decided based on the age and experience of those volunteering.

SOUTH CENTRAL

THE COMMUNITY HELD six Spring Gatherings during May in North Carolina, Guam and Jamaica. Sisters met to pray, consider their relationships through the lens of governance, respond to the plight of immigrants, look at ways to grow in care for one another, and share wisdom with delegates in preparation for the 2017 Institute Chapter.

Sister Aidan Donaldson, oldest living Sister of Mercy in the world, celebrated her 90-year Jubilee on March 25 at Convent of Mercy in Mobile, Alabama. Sister Aidan’s 109th birthday is August 20. Born in Ireland, she arrived in Mobile in 1927, where she ministered in education for some 50 years before transitioning to pastoral ministry.

NORTHEAST

Sister Patricia Anne Baca (seated, far left) will make her first profession of vows in St. Louis on July 29. With her are (from left, standing) members of the Community Leadership Team (CLT), Sisters Pat Coward, Linda Falquette, Jane Hotstream and Mary Rose Bumpus; (seated) Sister Jill Weber, incorporation minister, and CLT member Sister Debbie Kern.
AS THE SPONSORED schools in the Mid-Atlantic Community prepare to become part of the Mercy Education System of the Americas (MESA) this summer, the Mid-Atlantic Community Leadership Team held educational rituals for their seven high schools and three elementary schools. In these ceremonies of thanksgiving and transition, representatives from each school presented a brief history of their place of learning followed by a modern-day reflection by Catherine McAuley written by Sister Renee Yann and narrated by a member of the leadership team. Next, team members and the school’s presidents and board chairs signed a covenant between MESA and the school defining relationships, governance and accountability to ensure that the Mercy charism and mission continues into the future. The reflection from Catherine McAuley challenges each educator to “trust this change, it will bring a new grace and a new call. It is the next imagination of mercy, and you are its architects! Be faithful and be blessed. Be Mercy in the world!”

Sister Kristine Violango speaks at her final profession of vows in the Philippines on April 22.

NEW YORK PENNSYLVANIA WEST

SISTER COLLEEN O’TOOLE received approval from the Institute Leadership Team (ILT) to profess temporary vows on July 22 during the Theology of a Merciful Heart gathering in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Members of the NyPaW Transitional Coordinating Team (TCT) and ILT joined NyPaW sisters in Buffalo, New York, and Erie, Pennsylvania, for Community meetings in January. Consultations on the proposed Institute Governance Model were held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 28 and Rochester, New York, on May 6.

Sister Jenny Wilson participated in a Facebook Live interview from NativityMiguel Middle School in Buffalo where she teaches. Jenny’s interview as well as other vocation videos are available online at bit.ly/vocationvideos.

WEST MIDWEST

2017 HAS BEEN a year of recognition. Sisters honored to date include:

♦ Chicago’s Brother David Darst Center recognized Sister Joy Clough for her leadership.

♦ Sister Margaret Farley, Guilford, Connecticut, received the 2017 Ann O’Hara Graff Memorial Award, presented by the Catholic Theological Society of America.

♦ Sister Canice Johnson was recognized posthumously by Mercy Education Project, Detroit, Michigan. She was founder of the 25-year-old ministry.

♦ Sister Ruth Mutchler was presented The Committed Heart Award for her dedication to Margaret’s Village, a homeless shelter on the south side of Chicago, Illinois.

♦ Sister Joan Margret Schwager, Joplin, Missouri, was a finalist for the local Chamber of Commerce’s Golden Apple Award recognizing educators.

♦ University of Detroit Mercy honored alumna Sister Maurita Sengelaub, Farmington Hills, Michigan, for her accomplishments at its Annual Spirit Awards Dinner.

PHILIPPINES

SISTER NANCY HOFF of the TCT and Sisters Patricia McDermott and Deborah Trollett of the ILT traveled to the Philippines from April 18-26 to attend the final profession of Sister Kristine Violango and to meet with Philippine sisters, who are celebrating 60 years as a community.

Sister Kristine Violango speaks at her final profession of vows in the Philippines on April 22.

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A Call from the Ancestors: Struggling for Life in Panama and for All of Earth

To all who dare to draw near, First Nations peoples across the globe offer wisdom and a spirituality rooted in profound reverence for the sacredness of Earth.

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis warns against “the disappearance of a culture” and asserts that indigenous communities should be the “principal dialogue partners” when so-called “development” projects are undertaken; if there is to be any hope that we can reverse the fast pace of ecological destruction taking place across our globe, we need to listen closely.

When Panamanian Mercy Sister Edia “Tita” Lopez started her ministry in the western part of the country, she began by listening to the indigenous peoples and was drawn into what has now become their decades-long struggle for life. Their land, waterways and culture were being devastated by hydroelectric dam construction. She attended dialogue sessions, often required before a government or business undertakes infrastructure projects in indigenous territories.

Local communities voiced their opposition, but the construction went forward. They pursued lawsuits and mobilized protests, sometimes encamped as human roadblocks for weeks at a time, yet the bulldozers came in. Protestors have been killed or wounded by security forces, and many leaders put in jail. Dam construction and mining projects have displaced people and also destroyed homes, ancient sacred sites, fauna and vegetation, and the livelihood of fishing tribes. As with community groups in other countries where governments ignore their wishes and attack protestors, the indigenous in Panama have pursued international mechanisms, such as the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR), to elevate their cases for recourse.

Tita’s ministry in Panama was featured in a series of articles in *Global Sisters Report*. The articles illustrate how indigenous communities are fighting for their culture’s very existence, and how Mercy has also accompanied them with advocacy through the IACHR process in Washington, D.C.

In Western economies, the profit motive has become a “god,” reducing nature to a commodity. Indigenous peoples are resisting these threats for the sake of not only their land and water, but for the sake of us all who depend on Earth, our “common home,” for sustenance.

Mercy has accompanied their struggles, including the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota, the Lenca in Honduras and the Lumad in the Philippines. Being present like Sister Tita—and lending solidarity to grassroots movements on the front lines of protest—matters, as it lends protection.

Reflecting on our complicity, both individual and societal, as Mercy has done as part of preparation for the Sixth Institute Chapter, also matters for charting lifestyles in just relationship with all of creation.

Our Mercy faith call invites us to continue reflecting on these realities. Indigenous communities have helped us wake up to the urgencies; as Tita stated, “If we are to accompany the poorest, we must be prepared to accompany them in resistance.” The fate of this Sacred Earth is in all our hands.

—By Jean Stokan, Institute Justice Team

Links to Global Sisters Report articles about Tita’s ministry are available at bit.ly/TitaArticles. Shared with permission from Global Sisters Report.
Hearts Caught Off Guard & Blown Open:
The Mercy International Reflection Process in Retrospect and Prospect

By Sister Elaine M. Wainwright, RSM
During the last week of March 2017, a truly international gathering took place in Dublin to bring the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) to a close and to review its unfolding across the Mercy world during the previous year.

The gathering included the coordinators of the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP), one from each Institute or Congregation; the MIRP Guiding Team—Anne Walsh, MIA communications director, Sister Helen Diviney and myself; as well as Sister Elizabeth Davis, the representative of the Mercy International Association (MIA) members, and Sister Mary Reynolds, MIA Executive Director.

The words of the final lines of Seamus Heaney’s poem “Postscript” infused the week:

… You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open

These words capture the spirit that was leading the group through not only what had been discovered by engaging in the process, but also what was being revealed—a call named in the review process as “Mercy Global Presence.”

This article invites you to reflect upon the profound riches that emerged in local groups of sisters and partners in Mercy scattered across the world who engaged in MIRP. These, in their turn, will open a door on what is beckoning beyond this phase of MIRP, to what is being revealed.

In Retrospect

It was not only at the end of the Mercy International Reflection Process that hearts were caught off guard. Such an experience characterized its beginnings. The Theological Advisory Group within MIA was planning during 2014 for a theological reflection process that would enable the Mercy world to engage with the emerging call of Earth and the sometimes tense relationship of this call with the more traditional cry of the poor to which mercy attends.

Two key moments, however, blew our hearts open along this way. On April 11, 2015, Pope Francis proclaimed 2016 as an extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. It was to open on December 8, 2015, and close on November 20, 2016, the very time we were planning our reflection process. *Misericordiae Vultus* took our breath away by articulating in new and compelling language that the cry of the poor calls forth mercy:

“From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 25).

But that was not all: a second moment likewise caught us off-guard. The promulgation of *Laudato Si* (dated May 24, 2015) on June 18 that same year captured the religious imagination of the world with its foundational call to care for our common home, Earth. This was a new call to which we in the Mercy world were seeking to listen.

Mercy International Reflection Process

The Mercy International Reflection Process provided a framework for partners in Mercy (including ministry partners and all who associate under the banner of Mercy) together with sisters to engage reflectively, even contemplatively, on the twofold cry rising up from our world: the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor. These cries were refracted through many different lenses as sisters and associates, partners in mission and ministry, and colleagues across other Christian and religious traditions gathered in groups around the Mercy world—approximately 5,000 participants in all.

They met in Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines; were scattered across the Americas from Peru to Newfoundland; and clustered in the United Kingdom and Ireland—well over the 265 formal groups. They not only participated in the process informally but accompanied it in prayer.

The tool which provided the framework for such diverse groupings to engage ethically and theologically was a theological reflection process. This is a process that is informed by Cardijn principles (see, judge, act) and has been developed in liberation theologies across decades. It has been used in Mercy contexts both locally and internationally, the Burlingame Theological Reflection conducted by the Mercy International Research Commission in 2007 being one such example. (The papers that formed the basis of this process in 2007 have been published as *Fire Cast on the Earth—Kindling*, edited by Sister Mary C. Sullivan). As with all tools, it was refined in our use of it and reflection on that use.

Stage 1

As groups gathered to begin the process, they shared their stories and named the experiences through/toward which mercy was leading them in 2016. From the richness of what was shared, each group sought to focus their gaze on
one particular concern. These articulations were as diverse as the groups themselves, but as facilitators and coordinators brought together these focus issues, they formed into two key categories: displacement of people and degradation of Earth. This was not surprising given the movement of the Spirit that was palpable in the unfolding of the process and refracted in the twofold call of Pope Francis: mercy to the most vulnerable and care for a devastated Earth.

The displaced peoples that called forth a mercy response in the process included refugees and asylum seekers, those trafficked or homeless, those forced into migration as a result of climate change; those suffering domestic violence and the isolation of dementia. The groups focused on degradation of Earth attended to water, fracking, garbage and pollution, with water being the area of the most widespread concern.

Stage Two
Stage Two of the process invited groups to place their focal issue in a broader context, attending to some of the social, political, economic and environmental forces at work. This sent participants in search of such analyses in local media, in articles short and long, in books dealing with such current issues and in a range of YouTube videos and other internet resources. Some groups brought in local experts in their focal area to assist them with their analysis. This analysis stage can be a challenging one in the process which groups can want to move across quickly. One significant learning from the groups’ movement through Stages 1 and 2 was that a clear focus on and engagement with a group’s key issue and its closeness to the lives of group participants can provide an impetus for careful and engaged analysis.

Stage 3
It was with new lenses and new questions that participants engaged wisdom traditions at Stage Three of the process. These traditions included our biblical, theological and spiritual heritage; our Mercy traditions as refracted through Catherine McAuley and women of Mercy internationally and across almost two centuries; and new understandings of the universe. There was, therefore, an engagement of our wisdom traditions as diverse as the groups themselves.

In order to enhance participation at this stage, MIA supported the production of a set of video interviews...
called Voices which are available on the MIA website (www.mirpvoices.org). Participants could engage theologians such as Sister Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, and John Haught who study theology in light of the cry of Earth and our new understandings of the universe. Other voices included Sister Mary C. Sullivan who listens anew to the traditions of Catherine McAuley, ethicist Sister Margaret Farley, biblical scholar Sister Veronica Lawson and a number of others. The voices helped to inspire the groups and lead them to new wisdom and a new vision.

These new visions were recognized as “calls to transformation” informed by the previous three steps in the process. One example of such a call was this: to let God embrace us in our humanness (with its uniqueness and our diversity) in order to move us to greater compassion for and solidarity with all creation in our daily life. Another call was to “be a community which feels the pain of Earth and the cry of the poor with a new ecological consciousness reflected in attitudes, habits, structures and actions.”

Stage 4

At Stage Four in the process, the stage named simply as “Action,” many new commitments were made: to mobilize our power internationally through MIA with respect to refugees and efforts against human trafficking; to network with groups addressing climate change; and to encourage and promote individual and communal water use and conservation. This is to name but three. Many of the actions were local and thus will engage participants in their own contexts. Some groups, however, proposed actions that could involve MIA into the future. One general example of such a proposal was this: “exercise leadership by enabling its Mercy network to work towards positive change in the interconnected areas of displacement of peoples and the degradation of Earth, which is ‘our common home.’”

Outlook

Having engaged with and reflected on the reports provided by the 265 groups, there was a recognition in the group gathered in Dublin in March 2017 that MIRP had opened up a new door on Mercy into the future. It affirmed that our hearts can be moved by urgent current issues affecting the plight of the poor and the plight of our endangered Earth. It has provided us with one tool that can assist us toward a profoundly merciful response to such plights. As we become more fully the Mercy global presence that we have glimpsed, we will develop further tools. We are only on the cusp of something new.

Hearts have been caught off guard and, in that process, have been blown open as MIRP has unfolded. Commitment to the cry of Earth and the cry of the displaced poor has been engaged anew, and this is supported by new theologies and new spiritualities. It is all this that we will take into the future which we have but glimpsed together.

Sister Elaine Wainwright is a Sister of Mercy in the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea and is Professor Emerita in Theology at the University of Auckland. Her most recent publication is Habitat, Human and Holy: An Eco-Rhetorical Reading of the Gospel of Matthew, which was published last year by Sheffield Phoenix Press. She was International Director of the Mercy International Reflection Process. You can contact her at elaine.wainwright@ismapng.org.au.
The Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) inspired participants around the Institute to respond to the “cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor” in many ways.

In Connecticut, participants in one group protested a water bottling plant; in St. Louis, Missouri, they led a retreat day on water that drew dozens of people; and in rural Kentucky, they reflected on consumerism through the lens of the litter they found on local roads. Participants in Belize City, Belize, decided to offer the Awakening the Dreamer workshop to staff at St. Catherine Academy. Members of a small group in Providence, Rhode Island, are learning more about white privilege and racism in their area. In Chimbote, Peru, they are helping to clean up the bay, which has been polluted by fish-processing plants.

These are just some of the actions coming out of about 30 small groups within the Institute—made up of sisters, associates, companions, coworkers and friends—that accepted Mercy International Association’s invitation to participate in the process in the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The groups included one each in Argentina, Belize and Guyana, and multiple groups in Rochester, New York; Farmington Hills, Michigan; and Hartford, Connecticut. Groups also formed in Burlingame, California; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Cincinnati; Chicago; Portland, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; Silver Spring, Maryland; and at St. John’s University in New York City, New York.

Each of the groups was invited to choose an issue to analyze, pray and reflect on, and take action on over the year. Water was the most popular issue to explore, while other groups examined consumerism, immigration, nonviolence, sustainability and racism.

Members of the Mid-Atlantic Community followed a similar reflection process in preparation for their 2016 Assembly, and the fruits of their collective work also were woven into the fabric of the MIRP final report. Their reflections led them to an examen of their complicity in consumerism and a commitment to pray the mantra: “May I live gratefully and simply today.”
ATTRACTION & DELIGHT

A REFLECTION ON THE APOSTOLIC YEAR OF THE NOVITIATE

By Sister Megan Brown
Mary Ann Doyle has something to say about doors: “The Convent was then nearly finished. During the time of its being built, I sometimes walked near it, and felt a great attraction to it. I once asked the man who had care of it to allow me to see it, and was so delighted that I fixed my heart on it. I was introduced to Revd. Mother. We were much pleased with each other.”

By her own admission, Mary Ann “felt a great attraction to it” and was so delighted that she “fixed her heart on it.” Her attraction and delight were about so much more than a building. In her walking back and forth, in her discernment about where God was leading her, it was the building, a concrete sign, that caught her eye and captured her imagination!

The rest of the story is warmly familiar: On September 24, 1827, Mary Ann Doyle and her companions opened the door of 64A Baggot Street, and Mercy was poured anew on the world. How did they open that famous door—with warmth, trepidation, enthusiasm, doubt? Most likely they experienced the nervousness of new beginnings and the great high hopes of doing something wonderful for God and the women seeking shelter.

There is a picture depicting a line from the Book of Revelation—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock”—in which Jesus stands in front of a door without a doorknob. The implication is that the door can only be opened from within. How the door is opened and with what disposition of heart is ours and ours alone. Jesus waits.

**OPENING DOORS TO OUR APOSTOLIC NOVICES**

A new member crosses many thresholds, knocks on many doors. By the time she is ready to begin her apostolic novitiate, she has been in formal relationship with the Community for at least two years before her Entrance Ceremony. She has also spent at least two years as a candidate and lived one year in the canonical novitiate—

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altogether, at least five years! Imagine all the doors opening and closing, the number of thresholds crossed. At each step along the way she has been welcomed into community by women willing to accompany her on her journey.

The apostolic novitiate year is an important part of the woman’s experience of community living. Having spent the canonical year praying, studying and living in community, she is now ready to set her feet and her heart to community life and ministry with new eyes and new understanding. As *For the Love of Mercy* states, “The purpose of this time of greater ministerial involvement is to offer the novice an opportunity for further integration of her own experience of God, her self-knowledge and practice of compassion in ministry. Sufficient time for this is essential in order to continue her discernment and to prepare for the profession of vows” (3-40). The members of the welcoming community play an integral part in providing a context in which the apostolic novice can deepen her discernment about professing vows. It is once more about doors. Just as Mary Ann Doyle opened 64A Baggot Street and as Catherine herself opened countless doors across Ireland and even one in England, so too the members of our welcoming communities open the doors of their lives to the novice.

During the past few years, the New Membership Team instituted the practice of asking for welcoming communities and ministries willing to host an apostolic novice. Responses to this request span the Institute from Sacramento, California, to Cincinnati, Ohio. Doors open and hearts of Mercy provide places in which the novice can learn by living as a vowed member before actually professing vows.

**VOICES FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE DOOR**

Being a part of a welcoming community is a privilege and a sacred trust. Listen to some of the comments of professed members living in welcoming communities:

- “I am inspired by their [new members'] desire for God, their openness to engage, their desire to serve others, their courage to enter into the transformative process of living in community.”
- “Welcoming a new member into sharing our lived life in community calls one to a deep reflection on our faithfulness, to all that we believe about our vowed life and how we live it in word and deed, heart and soul.”

Living in a welcoming community also brings challenges:

- “The challenge comes in intentionally making the effort to be present in person despite the demands of ministry and a variety of different experiences.”
- “We can get set in our ways and so a challenge is to really listen and reply to their questions.”
- “It is a challenge to be honest about expectations to a new member whose life experience is culturally and generationally different from our own.”
- “For me, the gifts outweigh the challenges.”

The following samples of some comments from newer members present the experience of the apostolic year from their point-of-view:

- “Leaving the novitiate was a hard transition for me since I had become accustomed to an environment
of study, integration and intentional community. … One of the great gifts was my welcoming house which provided me with a safe place to process this transition as well as the communal support I needed to work through the requirements of that year of formation.”

♦ “The community welcomed me warmly and ensured I was as prepared and supported as possible for ministry.”

♦ “My experience of the apostolic year has been very life affirming. … Living in community helps me refuel for what the next day might bring.”

Moving into a new community is not without its challenges, as each of us knows. For the newer member, community life can pose some significant challenges: loneliness, misunderstandings, difference in theologies, trying to fit in to an already established routine, new ministry experiences and more. Newer members yearn for a sense of belonging—an acceptance that goes beyond words to a stance of deep listening and compassion.

A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

In her book Open the Door, Joyce Rupp states, “When I open the door of my heart to God, I do more than simply extend a smile of recognition or a nod of welcome. I open myself to grow and change in ways I may never dream likely.” Rupp’s words describe the transformative experience of the members of a welcoming community. The growing and changing are mutually enriching for the novice and for the professed members of the community. As the novice experiences the day-to-day realities of community life, prayer and ministry, she opens her heart more and more to the call to Mercy. Likewise, members of the welcoming community are challenged and stretched through word and deed to provide a context for the novice to deepen her discernment.

Attraction and delight—Mary Ann’s openness to the movement of God in her heart called her to conversion. The bricks and mortar of 64A Baggot Street became the courage and compassion of her life. The door which welcomed persons experiencing poverty is the same door, opened from within which embraces our novices. Conversion is risky. Mary Ann knew it well. Catherine knew it well. Transformation is possible. Our Institute knows it well.

Hurrah for new foundations! Hurrah for that hospitality of heart which continues to fling open the door of Mercy. Hurrah for each of us as we welcome newer members into our midst. Hurrah for new learnings and new opportunities. Hurrah for attractions and delights! Hurrah for joys and sorrows intermingled and hearts centered on God who guides all our openings and closings. Hurrah for Jesus who patiently waits with exquisite courtesy for doors to open.

Sister Megan Brown is an incorporation minister for the Mid-Atlantic Community. She also engages in the ministry of spiritual direction and retreat work. She can be contacted at mbrown@mercymidatlantic.org.

Sister Susan Ruedy shared these photos from the welcoming community in Cincinnati, Ohio. From left:

1) The welcoming community gathers for a photo. Seated, from left: Sisters Cheryl Erb; Colleen O’Toole, an apostolic novice; and Claudia Cano. Standing, from left: Sisters Susan Ruedy and Doris Gottemoeller.

2) Susan (left) and Claudia check their backyard compost bin.

3) From left, Colleen, Doris, Cheryl and Claudia at the local zoo.

4) More fun at the zoo with Claudia, Doris and Colleen posing as meerkats next to Cheryl.

5) Colleen (left) and Doris work together on a puzzle, a favorite pastime.

6) Colleen (left) helps Susan with dinner.
THE IMAGE OF THE DOOR, both of our own hearts and the door that opens us to the lives of those with whom we minister, is an image that certainly captures the spirit of the apostolic novitiate experience. Perhaps the integration of the opening of those doors best describes the goal of the apostolic year … a journey that continues throughout the rest of our lives.

The integration of “an ardent desire to unite oneself to God and to serve the poor,” in Catherine’s words of her time, call the apostolic novice to stretch herself in service to those in need and to see the face of God in those she meets. It is about opening the door and walking the streets, literally and figuratively. The integration of the apostolic experience is also a time of allowing those revelations of God to nourish her prayer and her community life as well as living in community in such a way that she can be nourished by the life of her sisters, their experiences, and their wisdom.

In our CCASA Community, the doors of our local communities are not numerous, which is not to say that it is a limitation. It calls us all to be welcoming and willing to share our lives in community with our newer members. Which means that it offers us all the opportunity and blessing of a more intentional integration also!

A blessing indeed.

S I S T E R  P A T R I C I A  M U L D E R I C K
CCASA Community
THE MARIE CHIN, RSM

MERCY LEGACY AWARD

ANNOUNCED AT THE SIXTH INSTITUTE CHAPTER
June 19, 2017 • Buffalo, New York
THE MARIE CHIN, RSM, Mercy Legacy Award was established to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and named in honor of Sister Marie Chin. Marie served in leadership for the Institute 14 years; she was a member of the first and second Institute Leadership Teams and Institute President from 1999-2005. The deep knowing of God within her allowed Marie the unique gift of seeing and honoring God in the other. Throughout all of her ministry, she recognized and called forth the inherent goodness of others.

“No doubt some of you will be expecting me to give you ... practical and specific information that you can apply in your work. ... I need you to know that I do not have a practical bone in my body. Having said that...”

Having said that, Marie Chin would launch into a fascinating story, replete with color, imagery, myth, and the magic of words that she could conjure up in poetic or symbolic fashion to speak practical wisdom to the ear and heart of each listener.

Marie’s own story and call begins on the island of Jamaica. She was one of five children born of a Chinese father and a Jamaican mother of mixed descent.

Converted to Catholicism at the age of 10, Marie recalled that as a teenager she hoped that Jesus would appear and make everything clear. She said, “I waited in the countryside of Jamaica where my parents lived and later in boarding school with the Sisters of Mercy. ... There was something calling me to respond although I was not yet aware of what that something was. I waited. Soon after high school, I responded to that something and became a Sister of Mercy.”

In 1961, Marie submitted her formal request to join the Kingston novitiate. The written application provided space to “Describe any trade or skill at which you are qualified.” Her response: “I play the piano.”

She began teaching at Alpha School, but her gifts beyond piano playing were soon evident.

The wind of the Second Vatican Council was blowing about her ears and the fire of its spirit took Marie beyond the classroom, beyond the island, to formative experiences that shaped her spirituality and her mission for the rest of her life. Yet her roots and her heart remained Jamaican to the core.

Time spent there was less than she wished, however, although through the years she did manage to serve as Jamaica’s Area Coordinator, as a spiritual director for both women and men, and as formation minister, retreat leader and Vicar for Religious for the Archdiocese of Kingston.

And then the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas called Marie to the role of councilor, then vice president and then president of the Institute.

Her response to that election in 1999 was: “Sacred is the call. Holy is the entrustment. I am deeply humbled by that entrustment. ... I want you to know that I need all of you to join with our God to transform our global world.”

It was during those years of Institute service that Marie’s stories became her hallmark and her gift. She gave that gift humbly, generously, and lavishly to listeners around the globe, sharing the gift of her stories and the richness of her spirituality.

Marie balanced contemplation with action. Before,
during, and after her years as Institute President, she showed a special care for those in the minority. Coming from a culture foreign to the United States, Marie could speak in the voice of minority cultures and lay out their world-views, even as their words were drowned by the din of louder voices and their perspectives often swept away by the agenda of the majority. Hers was a voice gentle yet firm, reasoned yet passionate, and above all, persistent and uncompromising. She spoke eloquently in two languages: that of the voiced and that of the voiceless.

The reality of poverty called out to Marie:

I, who had lived side by side with poverty in Jamaica had never seen poverty until I went to Peru. Every sense and sensibility of my being was assaulted. As I walked the barrios of Lima, met people who were desperately poor, held hands with consumptive children, sat in their hovels built on dung heaps, tried to talk to them in a foreign language, prayed with them daily at Eucharist, something began to move inside of me. … The amazing power of the poor took hold of me – for the poor are powerful, you know. It is a myth to pretend they are not. I think this is why we are sometimes afraid to get too close to them. These “poor” people disarmed me; they sneaked under my defenses and showed me a face of God I had never seen before.

Being faithful to the spirit of Marie, the Institute Leadership Team, over the next 25 years, will annually award $25,000 to a Mercy ministry that serves those who are economically poor. The award will honor a Mercy ministry that accompanies people in their education and spiritual formation.

The first award was presented on June 19, 2017, at the Sixth Institute Chapter, to the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica.

As part of the award presentation, the Chapter body celebrated the life of Sister Marie Chin with a video presentation. You can watch the video at bit.ly/MarieChinLegacy.
Calendar

AUGUST 8-11
Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Assembly 2017
Orlando, Florida
Contact: Sister Grace Hartzog, SC ghartzog@lcwr.org

OCTOBER 5-8
Mercy Associate Leadership Council (MALC) Conference
Latham, New York
Contact: Associate Ty Barnes tbarnes@mercysc.org

OCTOBER 13-14
Mercy Secondary Education Conference
Omaha, Nebraska
Contact: Sister Corinne Raven cravenrsm@netmercyed.org

OCTOBER 20-22
New Members Weekend
St. Louis, Missouri
Contact: Sister Cynthia Serjak cserjak@sistersofmercy.org

OCTOBER 23-28
Institute Leadership Conference
Farmington Hills, Michigan
Contact: Sister Karen Dunville kdunville@sistersofmercy.org

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“Seasons in Peril” by Sister Corlita Bonnarens.