



A Reflection *of* God's MERCY

Prayer Services,
Liturgies and
Resources
For
Mercy School Communities

Sandy Flaherty

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Sandy Flaherty
Mercy High School
2750 Adeline Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010
sflaherty@mercyhsb.com

Dedication

Oh Mercy,
How I have loved you
These years of my life,

Your greying gentleness
And ever-reaching compassion,

Your persistence in congressional halls
And courage in flooded Honduran lands,

Your dedicated teachers
And life-giving youth,

The beauty of your music,
Your vision, your voice.

Your foundress sings to me,
Drawing me further into her riches,

Illuminating a direction,
Setting a path for my life.

I sing a litany of praises
For her.
In thanksgiving and joy,
Oh Mercy, I sing of you.

For I am forever your student,
Aspiring daughter of your foundress,
Mother Catherine.

IN GRATITUDE

Angie Simonetti, through her own creative contributions, has encouraged my liturgical work for years. I am thankful to Angie for her assistance in the preparation of many of these liturgies when they were first celebrated. I am grateful to Angie for her input on the *Eight Elements for Effective Liturgy, Environment* section.

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Sr. Suzanne Toolan, RSM, has taught me that liturgy is an art form and the liturgist an artist. By her example, I have come to appreciate the beauty and richness of liturgical rhythm and movement and the power of music in worship. I don't know which brings me more joy, listening to the songs Suzanne composes or the grace and encouragement she daily brings. I am grateful to Suzanne for her input on the *Eight Elements of Effective Liturgies* section of this work.

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A Letter to Mercy Educators

Dear Mercy Educator,

I have a long history with the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy education. My own Mercy education began at St. Gabriel's Elementary School and Mercy High School in San Francisco. I have taught for twenty-five years in Mercy secondary schools, primarily Mercy High School in Burlingame, California. I have taught Religion and Drama and was the Religion Department Chair and Director of Campus Ministry. I am a former Sister of Mercy and am currently the Director of Mission and Catholic Identity at Mercy Burlingame.

I have a great love for the Sisters of Mercy, their mission, and Mercy education. It was in this spirit that I wrote this book. I believe that the Mercy mission and Mercy education have a great deal to offer both young people and the adults who serve in our schools. I believe that, through our Mercy heritage and mission, Mercy education has the capacity to heal, challenge and transform her participants; hence, Mercy education offers something *different*. Mercy education is a treasure to which I offer my continued commitment through the writing of this book. The resources in this book are the products of my years in Campus Ministry at Mercy Burlingame. I believe these resources will be of great help to you in planning rituals and celebrations at your own school. Please make use of whatever material you need to help your community celebrate Mercy and the wonders of our God.

In Mercy,

Sandy Flaherty

Notes on Using This Book

One of our tasks as Mercy educators is to nourish the spiritual lives of the individuals who make up our school communities. This book was written to help Campus Ministers and worship leaders provide meaningful prayer experiences for Mercy school communities. It is not intended as a comprehensive work on liturgy or liturgical planning. Please use this book as a resource; take what you need, yet continue your study of liturgy. The Church and many fine liturgists provide rich resources on liturgical practice and planning. I encourage readers to look further to deepen their own appreciation for the rich liturgical tradition of our Church.

This book was written to be used in Mercy school communities and contains resources for rituals, prayer services, liturgies and other Mercy celebrations. I grant my permission for the use of all the material within these pages by any Mercy community for prayer or any other Mercy celebration. If any of the material in this book is reprinted, I request that it is credited with my name and the title of the book or (if written by someone else) the author's name for the specific piece reprinted.

This book provides ample material for Mercy Day Liturgy planning. I encourage Campus Ministers and worship leaders to pay special attention to the "Mercy Resources" section for use in planning Mercy Day celebrations.

The book provides many creative ideas for such things as "Breaking Open the Word," skits, ritual action and creative processes to be used within prayer services and liturgies. I suggest that the reader skim through the entire book, as there are many additional creative ideas tucked within the various prayer services.

Campus Ministers and worship leaders are *encouraged* to make adaptations and changes to any of the resources in this book if those changes will improve the experience of prayer for their particular school community. Please be aware that some changes will *need* to be made in order to adapt the material to different school settings.

Within the text of this book, musical suggestions are made. Some are followed by the term "Gather Comprehensive." This indicates that the song can be found in the *Gather Comprehensive* book that is published by GIA publications. (See the "Music" section for more information.) In addition, after some musical suggestions the text again refers the reader to the "Music" section. In this section the reader will find additional resources.

Thoughts on Liturgical Planning



Eight Elements of Effective Liturgies

Liturgical planning is a very challenging process. Meaningful liturgies are the products of prayer, reflection and hard work; yet a life-giving liturgy is certainly its own reward. I offer here the eight essential elements I believe are necessary for effective liturgies.

1. Prayer, Time and Trust

There are many approaches to liturgical planning. For liturgies to be life-giving and meaningful, I believe that much is required of the liturgist — prayerful reflection, a commitment of time and thoughtful consideration, and trust.

Over the years, I have developed a prayerful and intuitive approach to liturgical planning, which begins with the following:

- prayerful reflection on the liturgical feast and readings,
- thoughtful consideration of the present concerns of the community,
- attentiveness to what is emerging within me, and
- prayerful listening for the whispers of God.

I believe that when the liturgist is prayerfully attentive at all these levels, she can begin to address the fundamental liturgical questions:

What do we as a community need to say to God?

Should our prayer be one of thanksgiving or sorrow? Are we in need of healing or reconciliation? Are we confused or frightened? Are we experiencing the world as lacking or blessed?

If the liturgist, through prayer and reflection, can begin to address the question *What do we as a community need to say to God?* she has unlocked the door to making the liturgical experience a meaningful one for the congregation. If this question is addressed, the liturgist can begin to try to create a liturgical environment where participants can prepare to listen for God's response — or the answer to the other essential question:

What is God trying to say to us at this time and in this place?

When the liturgist has been prayerfully attentive, and has addressed these questions fully, the liturgy begins to unfold and take shape within her heart and imagination.

At first this may seem an arduous task; but essentially what it entails is time and attention. The liturgist needs to allow enough time in advance of the liturgy so that she can periodically bring her awareness to the liturgy and allow it to slowly take shape.

Finally, the liturgist needs to trust that God participates in the liturgical planning with her. In so doing, the liturgist must also be attentive to all the channels through which God communicates — scripture, liturgical feast days, one's own creativity and imagination, dialogue with others, and personal prayer.

2. Liturgical Space

Liturgy should call us into a different time and place — “liturgical space.” Liturgical space takes us away from our busy schedules and routines and allows us “to be” — to be joyful, sad, hopeful, thankful, reflective, challenged, healed, touched and loved by God. Liturgical space draws us in and encourages us to examine, through the sacred lens, the fabric of our lives. Liturgical space invites us to go deeper, calls us to move slower, entices us to treasure silence and to choose our words more carefully. Liturgical worship should form and shape us, finally sending us forth renewed and sustained.

Creating liturgical space for young people can be challenging; yet it is certainly possible and immeasurably rewarding when achieved! When students experience and begin to understand liturgical space as different, they will desire it and begin to look forward to it.

To create liturgical space for young people, the liturgist and presider must:

- welcome and encourage participation
- remind participants that they have entered into a sacred place and are in the presence of God
- model an attitude of prayerfulness
- reflect the lived experience of the participants through readings, prayers, stories, music or dramatic narrations
- protect the worship environment from outside distractions and noise
- minimize movement within the liturgy
- choreograph transitions that flow with a prayerful rhythm
- minimize speech and maximize symbolic action, gesture and music
- provide time for quiet reflection
- encourage the congregation to respond

3. Risk and Forgiveness

In planning liturgies, remember two things:

Small risks reap small rewards; big risks reap big rewards!

Take risks! Try something new! Stretch the worshipping community and challenge their assumptions. Present the readings in a new way. Examine the readings from the eyes of the poor. Explore the power of silence. Try different kinds of music. Use symbolic gesture. Allow the ritual to speak for itself. Make use of visualization and meditation. Speak from the heart, and allow the congregation to do the same. Create an environment that sends a message. Allow the Spirit to work in and through you. Have faith. Be assured that, if called upon, the Spirit will come!

Forgive, forgive, forgive!

Forgive yourself if the liturgy doesn't go well and your creative idea doesn't fly. Quickly forgive the student who makes a mistake, the choir singer who misses a beat, the priest who skips a part. Forgive! Let it go. The individual parts of a liturgy do not define the whole. God works through our failed attempts just as profoundly as through our successes!

4. Participation of the Community Gathered

A liturgical experience should be shaped by the religious feast celebrated and should be mindful of the community gathered. If a liturgy is to be meaningful, it needs to incorporate the day-to-day lived experiences of the community involved in it. A liturgy should be a reflection of the real lives of its participants and must fully engage those sitting in the pews. The biggest challenge of a liturgy is to speak with and for its participants. The liturgy itself should become “the voice, the prayer” of its people.

To succeed in this, participation must fully engage the five senses, the spirit and the life stories of the individuals present. In this quest, liturgical planning and the liturgy itself become more of a listening, breathing, feeling art form that addresses the whole person.

5. Breaking Open the Word

Liturgical readings should reveal something to us about God and Salvation History, affirm our faith, spark memories, help us make connections, create images, prod our imaginations, help us look at something in a new way, tell us something about ourselves, and surprise us! This is what is meant by the expression “breaking open the word.”

As Catholic Christians we enjoy a very rich scriptural heritage filled with vibrant images and dynamic relationships. Unfortunately, on occasion the reading of the Word is lifeless. We sometimes experience scripture in this way because of its *presentation*. To remedy this problem, dramatic techniques can be enlisted to improve the quality of the *presentation* of the Word. Some of these techniques can be found in the “Breaking Open the Word” section of this book.

6. Music

In liturgical planning the liturgist should never underestimate the power of music and its ability to open the heart of the listener. Music can gather a congregation together, enabling it to sing and pray in one voice. Music is often the vehicle through which we enter into the realm of “liturgical space.” Just as liturgical gesture and dramatic forms have the potential to open the imagination, music can equally be a feast for the ear and heart — taking us places we have not been.

If music within liturgy has so much potential, why do so many liturgists have a hard time getting high school students to sing? I think one reason is that many students are not very familiar with liturgical music and feel uncomfortable singing among their peers. In addition, I believe the choral group is often seen as a performance group rather than an agent encouraging participation.

As with other parts of the liturgy, we need to break down the walls that inhibit our students from participating, and we need to provide creative alternatives of participation and musical selection.

An alternative form of encouraging participation would entail breaking up the choral group into smaller units and placing them in front of various congregational sections. From this closer proximity, the choral members can lead and actively encourage their peers to sing.

Encouragement by a peer is usually much more effective than the coaxing of adults.

As a way of encouraging greater student participation within musical leadership, enlist the help of an established group of students, like the volleyball team or debate club. Ask these students to prepare and lead the congregation in a song that most are familiar with, like the African American Spiritual “Rock My Soul.” Leave the group free to add their own rhythms and hand gestures. You will be amazed, not only by their creativity but by the response of the congregation! (See the *Songs* section for alternative verses to “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore” and “Rock My Soul.”)

Finally, try to make use of alternative types of music, such as classical, international, rock, folk and gospel. There are many musical arrangements and songs that could enhance the liturgical experience if carefully chosen.

7. Environment

(by Angie Simonetti, Mercy High School, Burlingame)

The environment is an integral part of each ritual, prayer service or Eucharistic celebration. The environment itself begins to give clues about the ritual’s themes and welcomes the participants as they enter the worship space. These clues help each participant enter into the ritual more fully. In creating a liturgical environment, the liturgist should remember that the Church has symbols that have served us for centuries. These symbols include candles, water, the cross and incense. If these symbols fit your theme, use them! Don’t overlook the obvious.

Some reflection on the liturgical year is also in order. Use the colors of the liturgical year on altar cloths, banners, ribbons, or any other appropriate item. The liturgist should reflect on the theme of the ritual and create an environment that enhances it.

The most important element in creating the liturgical environment is to sit in the worship space itself. While there, reflect on the ancient symbols of our Church, the liturgical calendar, and the theme of the service. What do you see? What do you feel? Will this environment welcome the congregation and help them feel at home? The environment should reach out to each participant and invite them to participate. The environment should further give hints to the congregation about the theme of the service. Also, remember that simplicity is best; having too many symbols often results in too many distractions!

8. Energy

Each liturgy has its own energy. Embrace it!

Welcoming



WELCOMING

From its inception, hospitality has been the hallmark of any Mercy community. First and foremost, our schools should be welcoming communities whose warmth extends to whoever walks through our doors, from repairman to potential applicant. If we are about Mercy, we are about welcoming.

Our liturgies should also reflect the Mercy Spirit of hospitality and welcome. A Mercy liturgy is inclusive in word and action. It speaks to, and is a reflection of, the real lives of the community gathered. It reaches all the way to the last pew, where the disgruntled teen sits, and across the side aisle to the exhausted faculty member distracted by troubles at home.

A welcoming liturgy gives the community gathered one voice with which to praise, give thanks and remember. It creates “Mercy Space,” where we stand as one in all our differences, amid all our struggles. It strengthens our identity as a community and connects us to our 193-year tradition of hospitality.

A Comfortable Cup of Tea

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

An exploration of Mercy hospitality through the symbol of “a comfortable cup of tea”

Materials

several decorative tea cups and saucers
tablecloth and napkins
decorative tea pot
tea
kettle of hot water
coffee, soft drinks
spoon

Gathering Ritual

Accompanied by instrumental music, make use of the tablecloth, napkins, tea pot, tea cups and saucers to create an inviting table. Prepare a pot of hot tea in the decorative tea pot. When the tea has been brewed, pour it into the tea cups. The tea preparation should be done in silence — slowly, step by step — and should be in plain view of all participants.

Gathering Reflection

Experts advise the following in making the perfect pot of tea:

Use a good quality loose leaf or bagged tea. The tea must be stored in an air-tight container at room temperature. Always use freshly drawn boiling water. In order to draw the best flavor out of the tea, the water must contain oxygen; this is reduced if the water is boiled more than once. Measure the tea carefully. Use one tea bag or one rounded teaspoon of loose tea for each cup to be served. Allow the tea to brew for the recommended time before pouring. Find a quiet place, preferably at a table with decorative table cloth and matching napkins. Invite a good friend to share your tea. Remain at the table until your body and soul have been adequately warmed.

Mercy Reflection

Many who are affiliated with Mercy are familiar with the phrase “a comfortable cup of tea,” but they may not be aware that Catherine McAuley uttered these words while she lay dying. It is said that Catherine was always greatly concerned for the welfare of her Sisters and whispered to Sister Teresa Carton from her deathbed: “Fearing I might forget it again, will you tell the Sisters [who had come long distances to be at her bedside] to get a good cup of tea — I think the community room would be a good place — when I am gone to comfort one another.”

Catherine understood that before the Sisters left Baggot Street and returned home they would

need time and space for healing. She understood the comfort that good friendship and “a comfortable cup of tea” bring in times of sorrow.

The experience of “a comfortable cup of tea” is at the heart of Mercy hospitality and tradition. It is our connection to a history of tenderness and compassion. “A comfortable cup of tea” is the one-on-one, person-to-person, experience. It is an activity that puts us at ease. It provides the space for story-telling and reminiscing. A Mercy cup of tea warms the soul, inviting openness and the sharing of secrets with a friend. It is a sacred ritual where tears, laughter, memories, hopes and dreams converge. A Mercy cup of tea addresses the heart, drawing our pain to the surface — pain in search of comfort and peace. Mercy tea is a communion that soothes our spirits and refreshes our souls. It deepens our relationships with one another, replenishing us so that we can return, again and again, to the works of Mercy.

Song

“How Can I Keep From Singing?” by Enya (*available on iTunes*)

Reflection Question

Invite participants to reflect on the following question: “How have you been comforted in a time of need?”

Sharing

Invite participants to share the fruits of their reflection with a partner.

Closing Prayer

God of Tenderness and Compassion, You live at the heart of Mercy. You have blessed us with Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy, and all those in our history who have reflected the light of Your Mercy to us. May the example of those who have gone before us instill in us a spirit of hospitality and welcome. May the Mercy tradition of concern for the poor awaken in us compassion for those less fortunate. May the tradition of Mercy challenge us to reach out in love to all those we encounter. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Sharing of Tea

Provide tea for all participants gathered. Please also make available coffee and other beverages, so those who do not drink tea can still share in and enjoy this part of the service.

The Art of Teaching

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

The experience of teaching

Special Note

This prayer service is most effective in a small group — e.g., the Religion or Campus Ministry Departments. The service can also be used effectively with new teachers, as a way of introducing them to the Mercy Educational Philosophy and Mission Statement.

The same prayer service could be used at a Parents Club or Board of Directors meeting by changing the reflection question to: “What object would best represent the gifts you bring to Mercy High School right now, and why?”

Materials

Numerous objects of daily use, such as: watch, soup ladle, yo-yo, bible, cartoon, calendar, musical instrument, greeting card, pancake turner, keys, cell phone, wallet, stapler, DVD, sunglasses ... you get the idea. There should be a wide variety of objects from which to choose and more objects than participants.

The Teaching Experience

The everyday objects should be spread out on a table in front of the participants. The leader then poses this question to the group: “What object best represents how you experience teaching right now, and why?”

Participants are given a few moments to reflect on the question and then are directed to pick up their chosen objects from the table and hold on to them. The participants are then invited to share their responses.

Scripture Reading

Luke 4:16-20

During the reading from Luke, the participants are asked to close their eyes and try to visualize the scene as it is read. The reading should be read very slowly, as a meditation.

When Jesus came to Nazareth, He went to the synagogue as was His custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reflection

Jesus is the great role model for teachers. Jesus was not only a master at conveying very difficult concepts in ways that could be understood, he created an environment of human encounter and engagement. As Mercy educators let us strive to not only educate our students but come to know them as human beings, encountering the divine spark hidden within each of them. May we, like Jesus, help to liberate the minds and hearts of the students under our care.

Song “Everyday God” by Bernadette Farrell (*available on iTunes*)

Closing Prayer:

Prayer to be read as a group

Lord,
Enable me to teach with WISDOM,
for I help to shape the mind,
Equip me to teach with TRUTH,
for I help to shape the conscience,
Encourage me to teach with VISION,
for I help to shape the future,
Empower me to teach with LOVE,
for I help to shape the world

Author unknown, prayer found at:
<https://www.thereligionteacher.com/teachers-prayer/>

A Teacher of Influence

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Remembering teachers who have made a significant impact in the lives of faculty and staff.

Materials

Several candles set about the room in plain sight of participants

Gathering Reflection

Voice # 1

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

-Carl Gustave Jung

Voice # 2

The best gift we receive from great mentors is not their knowledge or their approach to teaching but the sense of self they evoke in us.

-Parker Palmer

Reading

My Soul's Own Voice by Leslie Owen Wilson

The old woman artist, mother of my mother, sat still beside a window in her studio. Looking out into the world beyond, she spoke to me in a soft, familiar hush like rustled grass. And in a litany borne of age and wisdom said -- as if to the air, the heavens and the shadows: "Luckily, I had some teachers who changed my life. They saw in me a child of wonder and of promise.

For at that time of beginnings, it was an image I had pushed far away from myself. With gentleness and kindness they took me by my hand, and heart, and mind and led me through great doors too large for small children to open. They knew, beyond these doors, I would glimpse the image of my true self. There would be my destiny and the future visions of my imaginings. Through those portals of splendor, I met the flurried magic of art and music and the rhythmed words of ancients.

There were such patterns, sounds and sights that struck me all but dumb in their resplendence. And in those special places were the surprises and connections to my inner self.

Through the efforts of those dedicated few I entered new worlds of wonder and achievement, to find at last my soul's own voice.

It was they who let me look upon their magic mirrors, thus finding the vision of my special face.”

Quiet Reflection

Questions for Table Sharing

Share a story about one of your favorite teachers. What do you recall most vividly about that teacher? How did he or she make you feel? What was the ethos of his or her classroom?

(Allow some time for sharing and then ask)

Thinking about that same teacher, what does his or her story tell you about who you were at that time in your life? What was it about you, and about that moment in your life, that made this teacher so influential for you? What gift or truth about yourself did that teacher help reveal?

Naming Ritual

(Invite participants to move to one of the candles, announce the name of the teacher who has had the most impact on them and light the candle)

Closing Prayer

[Merciful God], who promised that all those who instruct others in the ways of holiness will shine as stars for all eternity, fill our hearts and minds with true knowledge and the art of teaching. Give us patience and understanding, justice and prudence, humility and fear of the Lord. Grant us wisdom and charity so that with a pure and holy love of God we ourselves may enjoy all these gifts and impart them to our students. ...

Open [our students] to your inspiration. Let them be instruments of your peace in their homes, in our land, and in the family of nations as they become children of God in the mystical Body of Christ. May the blessings of your sevenfold gifts be in all who teach and in all who learn through the Holy Spirit who is the love of the Father and the Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ — the Divine Teacher. Amen.*

Closing Song: “Thankful” by Josh Groban *(available on iTunes)*

**Prayers for Our Catholic Family*, 2014, Our Sunday Visitor.
www.osv.com

The Web of Mercy - Welcome Back

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Welcoming both seasoned faculty and staff and those who are new; getting to know one another

Materials

large round ball of yarn
three candles set on a worship table
bell
matches

Prelude

Ask three members of the staff to come forward to light candles.

Gathering Reflection

What is summer? For some it's long shadows on stretched-out days. For others it's the smell of newly mowed grass, or chlorine, or jasmine. The slam of a screen door, bare feet buried in sand, a homegrown tomato plucked from the vine and eaten straight up, novels to read, gnats, new loves, sunburn.... Summer is the haiku of seasons: intense, condensed, pithy. Long after graduation, it's the season for living as if we had nothing to do for three months but dream.

Ring bell.

Fall pulls us back, with its emails from Mercy, creeping anxiety, back-to-school commercials, mountains of mail piled high on top of desks, and school related projects waiting for attention.

Ring bell.

Welcome to the in-between, the moment that joins summer memory and fall beckoning ...
the moment when we say hello!

Welcome to each of us, to those we know and those soon to be friends.
Welcome to a new year, new challenges, opportunities for growth and learning.
Welcome to this day, which marks another path on the journey in each of our lives.

Welcome to Mercy ... to her warmth, laughter, charm, wisdom, vision, history, challenge,
and continued evolution.

Ring bell.

Web of Mercy

Invite participants to form a large circle. Tell them that as a way of getting to know one another better they are going to be asked to share their responses to the following: “Tell us something about yourself that we cannot tell by looking at you.”

While the participants are reflecting on the question, explain the following process. By using the large ball of yarn, those in the circle are going to create a web.

The leader of the prayer service should begin by sharing something about herself that others cannot tell by looking at her. When she is finished with her statement, she holds on to the end of the yarn and throws the ball to someone else in the circle. (Holding on to the end of the yarn will cause the yarn to unravel and create a yarn-line between the leader and the second person to share.) The process continues from there, with each person sharing. As each participant throws the ball of yarn, she needs to hold on to a piece of it so the web can be created. When the last person has shared, there should be an intricate web of yarn connecting all participants.

Prayer

It is no secret that we are all connected; this web just makes it more obvious. We are a maze of intricate connections, one to the other. We are all connected, you and I. Connected in word and action. Connected in spirit. We are tied to each other in our work, in our humanity, and in our need. Since we are thus tied together, help us, God, to be more gentle with one another. Help us welcome those new to our circle. Help us open this circle to include our students and their families, that they may find a home in the web of Mercy. God of all bond and connection, strengthen our ties, make us aware of how we affect one another, help us broaden the circle of Mercy. Amen.

Closing Song “Many and One” by Steve Angrisano
(available at www.ocp.org)

Please Note

When the prayer is completed, the group should bend down all at once and gently place the yarn web on the floor. In doing this, the yarn can more easily be rolled back up and won't become a wad of knots.

Mercy With Us and for Us

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

What does it mean to “be Mercy”?

Materials Needed

Mercy candle and matches

Image of Catherine McAuley

Mercy cross

Art paper and crayons

table cloth

tea cup

Images of people participating in the works of Mercy

Environment

(Participants sit in a circle surrounding a worship-table, which contains symbols of mercy noted above. Images of works of Mercy should be placed around the room.)

Gathering Reflection

Each of us here has had some experience of Mercy. In a sense, Mercy has extended an invitation to us. Whether that invitation came directly through another person or by some kind of calling, each of us has said “Yes” to something. The Mercy invitation is one that calls us to go deeper, to come to a greater understanding of the mission of Mercy in our lives. It is a call to reflection and a call to action. We gather to engage in reflection, so eventually we can go out to bring the Mercy of God to others. We are here to remember the ways others have “been Mercy” for us.

In a moment we are going to explore through prayer, meditation and discussion our own experiences of Mercy. You will be invited to focus on an experience in which the Mercy charism became real for you, either through someone’s care of you or your compassion towards another. We will begin our exploration through a guided meditation, so I invite you to make yourselves comfortable and begin to relax.

Guided Meditation

Make yourself comfortable, close your eyes, and begin to let yourself relax. ...

Begin to follow your breathing. Simply become aware of your breath moving in and moving out. ...

Now imagine that you are being surrounded by a gentle light. This light conveys to you a sense of love and healing. ...

Let yourself experience this light moving around you. Imagine that as it swirls around you it is relaxing every part of you... Feel the light washing over you, starting with your feet, through your legs, and up through your entire body, relaxing and warming you. ... Experience that each part of you is being touched with a presence that is loving and healing. ...

Breathe in the light, surrender yourself to it. Feel it coming into you with each breath. ... As you breathe in, inhale the warmth of this gentle light. Feel its love and healing enter you. ... As you exhale gently, let go of any anxiety or any fatigue.

Now picture this loving light swirling around inside you. ... Let it relax all that it touches within you, so that gradually your inner self is as still as the outer. ...

Now experience that this light is actually breathing you. Feel it breathing you. ... Imagine that you are being sustained by a presence that is loving and healing, even when you are not aware of it. You have only to relax into it. ... 1

(Pause)

Now ask yourself the question: “When have I experienced Mercy?” ...

Allow any images, feelings, forms or sensations to emerge in response to this question. Simply observe what you experience, being as open to it as possible. ... You may get an image that doesn’t make sense to you. Just let it emerge and know that you can understand it at a later time.

Notice any colors, shapes or textures. ... Become aware of any feelings you might have in response to what you see or sense. ...

Only when you are ready, gently begin to bring your awareness back to your surroundings. 2

(Pause)

You will notice that I have placed photos around the room. I invite you to walk around the room and find a photo that best illustrates your experience of the meditation. Once you have chosen a photo, please take it with you back to your seat. I have also provided art paper and supplies if you would rather draw or somehow represent your experience on paper.

Quiet Reflection allow about five minutes

Sharing

(Using the pictures provided, invite each participant to share their experience of Mercy.)

Mercy Reflection: The Meaning of Mercy

(Using specific images from those provided, the leader discusses elements of Mercy Indwelling, Hospitality, Action, Compassion and Presence).

Mercy Indwelling

Authentic tenderness and compassion begin with the self. The ability to “be Mercy” lies in our willingness to accept our own woundedness as human beings. It is through struggling with our own trials and tribulations that we learn to be tender and patient with ourselves so that, in turn, we can be the same for others.

If we have not experienced the pain of our hearts, the sorrow of our own souls, we will not be able to hold the pain of others. In actuality, it is precisely our humanity, our broken hearts, that will lead us to a more authentic expression of Mercy.

It is through our own brokenness that we come to a felt understanding of the passion of Jesus. It is through our own woundedness that our yearning for the resurrection intensifies and our dependence on the mercy of God becomes concrete. Essentially, how can we speak of the Mercy of Jesus and the compassion of God unless we have entrusted our own brokenness to them? How can we be compassionate to others unless we have first known compassion ourselves?

Mercy Hospitality

Many who are affiliated with the Sisters of Mercy are familiar with the phrase “a comfortable cup of tea,” but they may not be aware that Catherine McAuley uttered these words while she lay dying. It is said that Catherine was always greatly concerned for the welfare of her Sisters and whispered to Sister Teresa Carton from her death bed: “Fearing I might forget it again, will you tell the Sisters [who had come long distances to be at her bedside] to get a good cup of tea – I think the community room would be a good place – when I am gone to comfort one another. Catherine understood that before the Sisters left Baggot Street and returned home they would need time and space for healing. She understood the comfort that good friendship and “a comfortable cup of tea” bring in times of sorrow.

The experience of “a comfortable cup of tea” is at the heart of Mercy hospitality and tradition. It is our connection to a history of tenderness and compassion. “A comfortable cup of tea” is the one-on-one, person-to-person experience. It is an activity that puts us at ease. It provides the space for story-telling and reminiscing. A Mercy cup of tea warms the soul, inviting openness and the sharing of secrets with a friend. It is a sacred ritual where tears, laughter, memories, hopes and dreams converge. A Mercy cup of tea addresses the heart, drawing our pain to

the surface – pain in search of comfort and peace. Mercy tea is a communion that soothes our spirits and refreshes our souls. It deepens our relationships with one another, replenishing us so that we can return, again and again, to the works of Mercy.

Compassion and Presence

Mercy calls us to stand toe to toe, eye to eye, and heart to heart with others. It entails treating others as equals, being interested in them as persons, valuing their contributions, “sitting in the trenches” when need be, and “joining in their joy” when blessings come their way.

To engage in Mercy, first and foremost, means being present to another. We can deliver food, teach children, conduct meetings, and go to Mass; but if we are not present, if we do not in some way love our companions, what we are doing is not authentically Mercy.

The great gift of Jesus’ ministry was his incredible ability to be present to others – to show forth the love of God for all people. In our own lives we are called to do the same – to be fully present, so that God might work through us and with us for the good of all people.

Mercy Action

Catherine McAuley was driven by her love for Christ and a commitment to women and the poor. In the Mercy context, driven means: impelled by a call to service — an urgency, focus, one with a mission. As a teenager Catherine accompanied her cousin Anne to serve those in need. We know that Catherine suffered nightmares about the poor and that she felt a great urgency to serve them. She gave every cent she inherited to build the *House of Mercy* on Baggott Street, which opened as a school and a shelter for homeless girls, and later became an employment training center for young women.

“She is the woman who once found a demented woman alone and impoverished in a hovel and brought her home to Coolock; who once found an orphaned child thrown into the street and brought her home; who once during the 1832 cholera epidemic wrapped an orphaned infant in her own shawl and brought her home to a little bed in her own room; and who in the course of fourteen years on Baggot street welcomed “more than a thousand” such strangers through her Georgian front door -- often sixty at a time.”³

Baptist Russell (California)

Within twenty years of their arrival in San Francisco, the first Sisters of Mercy in California had established: St. Mary’s Hospital; a home for young, unemployed women and their children; a Magdalen asylum to care for prostitutes and other troubled young women; a home for the aged (that eventually became Mercy Retirement and Care Center in Oakland); an industrial school to teach young women to trade; and an employment bureau.

In 1871, they established their first permanent school in San Francisco, Our Lady of Mercy on Rincon Hill.

Frances Warde

Frances Warde and six other sisters—landed in New York City on December 11 1843. Traveling by rail and stagecoach, the sisters reached Pittsburgh on the evening of December 20th. The sisters began at once with visitations of the sick and prisoners, and provided religious instruction for both children and adults. In the months and years that followed, they opened schools, and began caring for the children at St. Paul’s Orphan Asylum, a ministry they would run for more than a century.

In Pennsylvania, Frances began planning for what was to become one of her greatest achievements there—the founding of Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh. With the support of Bishop O’Connor, the hospital opened its doors on January 1, 1847. Still in operation today as part of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, it was the first Mercy hospital anywhere in the world. During her lifetime, Frances founded more than one hundred convents, schools, hospitals and other ministries throughout Ireland and the United States, more than any other Sister of Mercy in history. 4

Song “Circle of Mercy” by Jeannette Goglia RSM

(available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/)

Mercy Partner Blessing

(Invite participants to choose partners and stand facing one another.)

God of Mercy, we stand before You today as a community to ask for Your blessing. We pray that Your love will be reflected in our words, Your compassion will show forth in our attentive listening, Your peace will live in our hearts, and your Mercy will be the work of our hands.

(Invite participants to place one hand over their partner’s head.)

As we celebrate Mercy today, let us be mindful of how we speak to one another. We pray that we will speak from a place of courage, that our sharing will be in truth. We pray that as a community we will offer words of encouragement and that our words may always reflect a spirit of dignity and respect for others. God of Mercy, bless our speech, the everyday chatter of our lives, transforming our words into the song of Your peace.

(Invite participants to place one hand near their partner’s ear.)

God of love, help us be good listeners. Help us be fully present to one another in good times and bad. Help us listen with our hearts as well as our ears. God of Mercy, give us the strength to listen carefully to the needs of all Your people.

(Invite participants to place one hand on their partner's shoulder.)

We pray that our experience of Mercy will open our hearts and make us more loving and compassionate people. We pray that our hearts will be big enough to hold the concerns and fears of our friends, and courageous enough to hold in love those in need. Help us open our hearts to those who are homeless, those who are sick, and those in need of our prayers. Give us hearts of flesh, tender enough to show Your Mercy. Let the community we know draw us beyond ourselves, to offer love to the friends we have yet to meet.

(Invite participants to hold their hands out in front of them.)

Tender God, as a community of Mercy we pray for Your blessing. We pray that the work of our hands will forever be a sign of Mercy among Your people. Help us reach out to each other in times of suffering and pain. Help us give of our time and talents to those who are in need. We pray that our hands will be instruments of peace, bringing forth Mercy.

(Invite participants to trace the sign of the cross on their partner's palm.)

We make the sign of the cross on the palms of the hands of our friends. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Invite participants to face front.)

Holy Spirit, we experience Your presence among us. We are gifted in this community with the Spirit of Your love and its action in our lives. Enable us to bring the spirit of Mercy to others. Help us live in the spirit of Your goodness and love.

May Your peace be reflected in our words.

May Your love find a home in our hearts.

May Your Mercy be the work of our lives.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Endnotes

1. Denison, Kathleen, “Experiencing the Light Meditation,” *Finding Healing From Within: A Course Workbook*, 1990, p. 7.
2. Denison, Kathleen, “Where Am I In My Life Right Now? Meditation,” adapted from *Finding Healing From Within: A Course Workbook*, 1990, p. 13.
3. Sullivan, Mary C., “Welcoming the Stranger: The Kenosis of Catherine McAuley,” *MAST: The Journal of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Summer 1996, p. 12.
4. Mother Frances Warde
www.mercyworld.org/catherine/mercy-foundresses/mother-frances-warde/, 2018

Remembering Mercy

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Remembering and celebrating those individuals who have been *Mercy* for us

Materials

tea cup
Mercy cross
Mercy candle
Bible
altar cloth
several votive candles
matches

Environment

Set an altar with the objects noted above. The votive candles should be placed (unlit) on the floor amid the participants.

Opening Song

The following refrain is to be sung to the tune of “Kumbaya.” (“Kum Ba Yah,” also known as “Kumbaya,” was adapted from a traditional African American Spiritual. The title is probably dialect for “Come by Here.” Source: Popular Music, 1920-1979. Detroit: Gale)

Refrain

Seeking mercy, Lord, come by here.
Seeking mercy, Lord, come by here.
Seeking mercy, Lord, come by here.
Oh Lord, come by here.
(Repeat refrain.)

Reading

“We remember our heritage, the many gifts of life we have received from God, through Jesus, Catherine and the women of Mercy who have gone before us. We believe that the life of our community is a vibrant sign of the gospel; we believe that the presence of the Church is made visible through our service to the poor, sick and ignorant. We, women [and men] of faith, remember our heritage and celebrate our community.”

— *Founding Document, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, 1991*

(Repeat refrain.)

Reading

This is an example of the type of personal reflection to be presented here.

“At the Zoo”

My third grade teacher was a Sister of Mercy. I liked her very much; she was full of fun!

I remember one particular day my class took a field-trip to the zoo. It was a bright sunny day, and Sister was dressed in her light blues. While walking from *Monkey Island* to see the lion feeding, I challenged Sister to a race.

She responded by bursting into a full sprint. I remember running as fast as I could and seeing the blur of blues just a step ahead. I remember laughing and Sister yelling, “Run, Sandy, run!”

I remember Sister winning the race, turning around with a great big smile, putting her arm around me, and accompanying me the rest of the way to the lion cages.

I lost the race that sunny day; Sister ran a lot faster than me! But I didn’t mind. I just remember feeling like the most important kid in the world, because for that great shining moment, Sister ran and laughed with me! I’m older now, but I still remember — with a smile!

(Repeat refrain.)

Reading

I don’t know Who —
or What —
put the question,
I don’t know
when it was put.
I don’t even
remember answering.
But at some moment
I did answer
Yes to Someone —
or Something —
and from that hour
I was certain
that existence
is meaningful
and that, therefore,
my life,
in self-surrender,
had a goal.

Hammar skjold, Dag. Markings. Trans., Leif Sjoborg and W. H. Auden. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

(Repeat refrain.)

Reading

“We should be as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre. Our centre is God, from whom all our actions spring ... and no action should separate us.”

— *Retreat Instructions of Catherine McAuley*

Meditation Song

“Little Wonders” by Rob Thomas (*available on iTunes*)

Reflection

“Remembering Women and Men of Mercy”

Invite participants to share a story about a person who has been “Mercy” for them. Participants should begin their stories by lighting one of the votive candles on the floor of the worship space. When each story is completed, the candle can be returned to its original place. As the stories unfold, the worship space will be dotted with lit candles symbolizing women and men of Mercy.

Closing Prayer

“Blest Are They Who Show Mercy: Mercy Shall be Theirs”

... I asked: Where are the merciful?

And the merciful answered:

We are the merciful

and we hear you

We are standing at every pathway

ready to heal what needs healing

ready to forgive what needs forgiving

Compassion is our way of life

Forgiveness is our pastime

We throw it around unconditionally

like dew on summer grass

like rain on dry, parched earth ...

(Wiederkehr, Macrina. Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers and Reflections. New Jersey: Silver Burdett Ginn, 1979.)

Lord Jesus, we give thanks for all those who have gone before us in Mercy. We remember today those who have touched our lives, those who have shown us compassion, those who have taught us the ways of your peace. Lord Jesus, like those who have gone before us, make us women and men of Mercy. Amen.

Song “Suscipe of Catherine McAuley” by Elaine Deasy

(*available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/*)

A Rainbow of Color

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Appreciating our gifts and differences; getting to know one another

Special Note

If this prayer service is presented in a group of 30-50 participants, the end result is a beautifully colored design created in a brandy snifter. The snifter can then be placed in a prominent place in the school to remind the faculty members of their unity and gifts.

Materials

brandy snifter

colored sand (can be purchased at art stores)

several small clear containers to hold sand eg. medication cups

candle

matches

Directions

Participants sit in a circle surrounding a worship-table on which has been placed the empty brandy snifter and the various containers of colored sand. The service begins with the reading "Watercolor Dreams." This reading will help participants begin thinking in terms of color.

Gathering Reflection

"Watercolor Dreams"

I should, at some point, take a paint brush to the canvass of my life. My blue moods, my red passions, my golden dreams.

With a steady hand I would draw out the shoulds and schedules and must do's. I would paint slowly and methodically, highlighting their dense structure and thick confining lines.

With an artistic flare I would rhythmically apply splashes of reds, yellows and oranges to my life's joys and sorrows. I would paint freely and wildly, coloring each life-giving psalm.

As a child before an easel, I would enjoy being splattered and stained by the unfolding mystery before me. As a kindergartner I would give up on the brush and use my hands to explore the texture of my own coming into being.

Someday I will take a brush in each hand and conduct a symphony of shades and hues, filling the world with a colorful medley of tunes.

I am a painter and an artist, creating on the canvass of my own artistic dreams. I am a singer and song writer, singing a song not yet sung. I am paint and a paintbrush, adding color to the canvass of my own life.

Reflection Question

Take a moment to reflect on the colors set before you, and choose one that you feel best represents who you are right now in your life. Which color would you be and why?

Period of Silence

A Rainbow of Color

(Participants are asked to come forward one at a time. Each participant then chooses a color, states why that color represents him or her, then pours the sand into the brandy snifter.)

Song “We are Many Parts” by Marty Haugen (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Closing Prayer

God of Mercy and all creation, You color our world with Your grace. As Your people, we are an array of passions, moods and creative abilities. Help us appreciate the colorful nature of each of us and treasure our differences.

We pray also for our students, who bring much color into our lives. Bless their red faces, their blue moods, their greening into maturity, the purplish mystery of their spirits, and the pinkish vulnerability they place in our hands daily.

We pray that through Your mercy our community will be a place where everyone can be proud of all their own colors. We pray that our rainbow is big enough to embrace the dimmest and brightest of all Your people. In our reds, blues, greens and yellows, we give praise to You and forever call upon Your mercy.

Shifting Sands

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Accepting change and the mess that often accompanies it

Special Note

This prayer service is meant to be used as the second part of a two-part series that begins with the “A Rainbow of Color” prayer service.

Materials

brandy snifter (used in the “A Rainbow of Color” prayer service)

Environment

The brandy snifter is placed on the center of the worship table so everyone can see it and be reminded of the “A Rainbow of Color” prayer service.

Gathering Reflection

“Watercolor Dreams”

I should, at some point, take a paint brush to the canvass of my life. My blue moods, my red passions, my golden dreams.

With a steady hand I would draw out the shoulds and schedules and must do’s. I would paint slowly and methodically, highlighting their dense structure and thick confining lines.

With an artistic flare I would rhythmically apply splashes of reds, yellows and oranges to my life’s joys and sorrows. I would paint freely and wildly, coloring each life-giving psalm.

As a child before an easel, I would enjoy being splattered and stained by the unfolding mystery before me. As a kindergartner I would give up on the brush and use my hands to explore the texture of my own coming into being.

Someday I will take a brush in each hand and conduct a symphony of shades and hues, filling the world with a colorful medley of tunes.

I am a painter and an artist, creating on the canvass of my own artistic dreams. I am a singer and song writer, singing a song not yet sung. I am paint and a paintbrush, adding color to the canvass of my own life.

Reflection on Change

Do you remember, not so long ago, we came together to pray, to begin yet another school year? We picked up little cups of brightly colored sand and created a picturesque design in the brandy snifter.

By pouring the sand, we created patterned lines, each one separate from the next. How nicely each ribbon of color lies, one on top of the other. How cozy and neat is each, contained in its own unit of space, so pleasing to the eye!

Since then, much has changed in our personal lives and professional world. Through this exercise we discovered the gifts that each of us brings. We have also experienced the richness created when we blend our gifts and lives together. Sometimes this blending is gentle and free-flowing; at other times it is rocky and tumultuous. Sometimes the blending of our lives is by gentle invitation; at other times it is a force outside of us pressing in. Life itself impels us to change.

In our history we spoke of department work ...
we move towards interdisciplinary curriculum.

We were once an independent high school ...
we move towards gaining wisdom from other Mercy schools.

Historically we valued sameness ...
we strive to value our diversity.

In our history we challenged our students ...
Today we respond to the challenges of our students.

Previously we saw the Church as prophetic ...
We must now answer the prophetic call within.

In the past the Sisters of Mercy passed on the Mercy Mission ...
Today we must embody Mercy ourselves.

Reflection Question

What one word would you use to describe how you feel about change?

Pouring of Sand

Members of the faculty and staff come forward in department groups. As each group gathers around the worship table, the sand in the brandy snifter is poured through their hands. As the sand is being poured, each participant is invited to share her word about change. Remember not to pour too much sand per group, as the sand has to last through several groupings.

Reflection on Messiness

Saying yes to change is saying yes to reality. It is saying yes to creativity and exploration. It is saying yes to the expansion of the human spirit. It is an affirmation of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and all the "mess" that came after it. It is saying yes to the discovery of flight and electricity, to the eternal quest of the human spirit.

Saying yes to creativity and justice is saying yes to messiness — allowing life to flow beyond our set boundaries into areas we never dreamed of before. It's creating a space for the possible.

Welcoming change is saying yes to cleaning up a lot of messes — things that went wrong, trials that failed. Messes are a lot of work — but well worth it.

Simply, it is surrendering to the inevitability of our own evolution. We are a searching, reaching people, forever looking forward.

Initialing in Sand

To symbolize their acceptance and participation in the messiness of change, the participants are invited forward to trace their initials in the pile of colored sand.

Song

"Rock My Soul" (see special version in *Music Resources* section) -or-
"The Times They Are A-Changin'" by Bob Dylan (*available on iTunes*)

Closing Prayer

"We Are One"

We are one,
after all, you and I;
together we suffer,
together exist,
and forever will recreate each other.

— *Pierre Teilhard De Chardin*

Take Off Your Shoes

Faculty Prayer Service

Theme

Being attentive to your own journey

Materials

hand lotion

towel

several different kinds of shoes (*see “Gathering Reflection” below*)

a pan filled with water (for soaking feet)

4 volunteers

instrumental music

ipod/iphone speaker

one toddler and one mother (optional)

several magazine pictures depicting people doing different things and expressing various emotions

Environment

Set the chairs in a circle. Lay out the magazine pictures in the middle of the group. Line up several pairs of shoes among the pictures.

Gathering Reflection

As actions are described in the reflection, volunteers will perform them. The more visual and experiential the reading is, the richer the experience for the community gathered. Instrumental music can be played in the background as an enhancement to the reading.

Read slowly, allowing time for action.

We enter the world in bare feet, with baby soft skin and tiny toes. For loving parents and grandparents, babies’ feet are objects of joy. They touch them, play with them, and rub them to keep them warm.

(Mother and toddler perform task as reading continues.)

Soon the babies’ feet are covered with cute little pink or blue booties to keep them warm and protected. We believe these booties will keep babies’ feet safe.

Eventually babies’ feet must be tested, so parents prop babies up and begin to teach them the motions of walking. Babies seem to enjoy this challenge, and their feet seem to reach and touch the floor intuitively. Although babies’ feet are quite tentative and unstable during the first steps, they seem to want to keep going, keep walking.

As toddlers, we explore the world around us through our feet. We test the temperature of the

water with our big toes. We learn the challenge of walking across hot cement without burning our feet. We learn how to maneuver through the sand boxes of life equipped with our buckets, shovels and quick, agile feet.

(Volunteer places a pair of sneakers in the middle of the circle.)

As children, we cover our feet with brand new sneakers, as if they were shiny trophies. Showing off the bright colors, we believe that a new pair of sneakers will surely allow us to run faster and jump higher. Our feet become the bearers of pride and prestige.

(Volunteer tries on a pair of heels.)

Yet the teen years give way to other values, as we unlace the sneakers and slip on more elegant foot coverings called high-heels. These shoes smash our toes, give us blisters, and sometimes cause foot cramps; but they also accentuate a beautiful dress and the muscular curves of our shapely calves. Believe it or not, we dance in these shoes and, at times, are even able to forget how much they hurt our feet!

(Volunteer applies lotion to tired, aching feet.)

Later, the responsibilities we take on cause us to pay less attention to how we look and more attention to our ability to keep moving. We don't have the time to be bothered with sore feet; so the high-heels get pushed to the back of the closet and we slip on flats and comfortable walking shoes. We look for anything that will keep our feet comfortable, as we try to juggle the challenges of the work-a-day world.

(Volunteer soaks feet.)

When our lives quiet down, we are quick to pull off those shoes and snuggle into slippers, fully equipped with layers of cushion, to support our worn, tired feet.

And, in the twilight years, our feet become bare again, as in sickness and death we leave the world as we entered it — in bare feet.

Scripture Reading

Exodus 3:1-5

Reading and Mindful Walking

Invite participants to take off their shoes, stand in a circle, turn to the right, and begin walking slowly, as the following poem is read.

Begin to walk, slowly, mindfully.

Focus inward as you move; feel the grace of your body moving.

Feel the ground under your feet.

Feel your feet touch the floor.
Feel your rootedness to the earth.

Day in and day out, our feet take us everywhere.
We slide out of bed in the morning and our feet hit the floor.
Our foot steps on the gas pedal as we make our way to work.
We are running here and there so fast everyday that we don't
even notice our feet touching the ground.

At work we run faster, at the grocery store we stand in line.
We hike upstairs.
We change our shoes.
We soak our feet.

Pay attention.
Pay attention to your steps.
Be mindful where you walk.

Where are your feet taking you these days?
With whom do you stand?
With whom are you walking?
Where do you wish your feet could take you?

(Repeat last four questions slowly.)

Song

“Pilgrim” by Enya (*available on iTunes*)

Choose a Picture

Ask participants to choose the picture before them that best depicts their answer to one of these questions:

- *Where are your feet taking you these days?*
- *With whom do you stand?*
- *With whom are you walking?*
- *Where do you wish your feet could take you?*

Group Sharing

Ask participants to share why they chose their picture and how it relates to one of the above questions.

Reading

“Child of Wonder”

To be this child of wonder, you must learn to take off your shoes often. Taking off your shoes is a sacred ritual. It is a hallowed moment of remembering the goodness of space and time. It is a way of celebrating the *holy ground* on which you stand. If you want to be a child of wonder, cherish the truth that time and space are holy. Whether you take off your shoes symbolically or literally matters little. What is important is that you are alive to the *holy ground* on which you stand and the *holy ground* that you are.

My bare feet walk the earth reverently
for everything keeps crying,
Take off your shoes.
The ground you stand on is holy
The ground of your being is holy.

When the wind sings through the pines
like a breath of God
awakening you to the sacred present
calling your soul to new insights
Take off your shoes!

When the sun rises above your rooftop
coloring your world with dawn
Be receptive to this awesome beauty
Put on your garment of adoration
Take off your shoes!

When the Red Maple drops its last leaf of summer
wearing its “burning bush” robes no longer
read between its barren branches, and
Take off your shoes!

When sorrow presses close to your heart
begging you to put your trust in God alone
filling you with a quiet knowing
that God’s hand is not too short to heal you
Take off your shoes!

When a new person comes into your life
like a mystery about to unfold
and you find yourself marveling over
the frailty and splendor of every human being
Take off your shoes!

When, during the wee hours of the night
you drive slowly into the new day and the morning's fog, like angel wings
hovers mysteriously above you
Take off your shoes!

Take off your shoes of distraction
Take off your shoes of ignorance and blindness
Take off your shoes of hurry and worry
Take off anything that prevents you
from being *a child of wonder*.

Take off your shoes;
The ground you stand on is holy.
The ground you are is holy.

Wiederkehr, Macrina. *Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers and Reflections*. San Francisco: Harper Press, 1991.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we stand in union with Moses, who took off his shoes before the burning bush, and with the disciples, whose feet You washed the night before You died.

We stand before You without shoes.
We stand before You in humility.

Barefoot, we are mindful of those in our world who go without shoes daily because of poverty, sickness and oppression.

We stand before You in hope that we might become women and men of the earth — grounded, centered, and filled with Your goodness.

Help us to be women and men who remember the poor, who are rooted in faith, and who are willing to walk our own individual journeys.

Give us the strength to follow where You lead. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, as we pray
...

The Lord's Prayer

Other Options

(The sharing of pictures could be replaced with a reading of the Gospel story of "Jesus Washing the Feet of the Disciples" followed by a washing of the feet of the community gathered.)

Additional Readings for Faculty Prayer Services

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

Saint Oscar Romero, Salvadoran Archbishop, (1917-1980)

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.

Trust in the Slow Work of God

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest, paleontologist, philosopher (1881-1955)

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are, quite naturally, impatient for everything to reach the end without delay. We would like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that progress is made by passing through some stages of uncertainty — and that may take a very long time; and so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually; let them grow, let them shape themselves. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time and grace will make you tomorrow. Only God can say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give God the benefit of believing that the Spirit is leading you. Accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

I Want to Thank You, Lord

Dean Alan Jones, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

I want to thank you, Lord, for being close to me so far this day. With Your help, I haven't been impatient; lost my temper; or been grumpy, judgmental or envious of anyone.

But I will be getting out of bed in a minute, and I think I will really need your help then!

Amen.

We Are Gardeners, You and I

In our love and care for our students
We are gardeners of the grandest kind.
Instead of tending flowers
We tend children's lives.

We are at work in the garden of the Lord.
The labor is long
And the sun is hot.
And yet we garden away,
We plant and we sow seeds.

We are called, dirty overalls and all,
At this time
And in this place.
With our own unique gifts,
Our bag of tricks,
With these hands and these hearts,
We work the soil.

No one will ever garden quite like you or me.
Nor will they garden in the soil of our particular classroom,
Rich with weeds, roots, ideas, challenge, wonder —
A classroom filled with the expectation of growth and new life.

As Christians we are a gardening people.
It is in the garden of hope that we work, live, breathe and find our being.

Tuesday's Morning Class

They shuffle in slowly
Backpacks, smiles, sighs and groans
Restless hearts, curious youth
Chuckles, silence and adolescent moans

Lesson plans, study guides
Impending tests and midterm
All prepared with love
So that *they* might grow and learn

I pick up my notes with the left hand
And marker with the right
Stunned, I am suddenly captivated
By an extraordinary sight

The beauty of their faces
Endless possibilities, hopes and dreams
The vocation of teaching ...
So much more than it once seemed

Teacher's Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Enable me to teach WISDOM, For I help to shape the mind.
Equip me to teach with TRUTH, For I help to shape the conscience.
Encourage me to teach with VISION, For I help to shape the future.
Empower me to teach with LOVE, For I help to shape the world.
AMEN.

Anonymous
www.thereligionteacher.com/

A Teacher's Prayer, Olga De Juana

Help me to be a fine teacher, to keep peace in the classroom,
peace between my students and myself,
to be kind and gentle to each and every one of my students.

Help me to be merciful to my students,
to balance mercy and discipline in the right measure for each student,
to give genuine praise as much as possible,
to give constructive criticism in a manner that is palatable to my students.

Help me remain conscientious enough to keep my lessons always interesting,
to recognize what motivates each of my students,
to accept my student's limitations and not hold it against them.

Help me not to judge my students too harshly,
to be fair to all, to be a good role model,
but most of all Lord, help me to show your love to all of my students.

Amen.

Prayer for Generosity, St. Ignatius of Loyola

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labor and not to ask for reward
save that of knowing that I do your will.

A Teacher's Prayer, James J. Metcalf

I want to teach my students how--
To live this life on earth,
To face its struggles and its strife
And to improve their worth.

Not just the lesson in a book,
Or how the rivers flow,
But to choose the proper path,
Wherever they may go.

To understand eternal truth,
And know right from wrong,
And gather all the beauty of
A flower and a song,

For if I help the world to grow
In wisdom and grace,
Then I feel that I have won
And I have filled my place.

And so I ask your guidance, God
That I may do my part,
For character and confidence
And happiness of heart.

The Art of Juggling

Student Leadership Prayer Service

Theme

Juggling and finding balance amid busy schedules

Materials

playing cards, 3 per participant

set of 3 balls for juggling

juggler (someone who knows how or is brave enough to try)

Directions

Begin the prayer service by inviting a student or staff member to juggle or attempt to juggle.

Either way, the participants will begin to notice the skills needed to juggle successfully.

Gathering Reflection

When we hear the word “juggling,” we may think of trying to accomplish several tasks at once. As a student leader, you will be called upon to juggle several projects at once — like planning Mercy Day, selling tickets for the opening dance, attending class meetings, and keeping up with your homework. Juggling several tasks simultaneously will become a daily routine.

There is another type of juggling that we are familiar with — the type practiced by circus performers and street artists, an art form that has been around for more than four thousand years. Juggling is considered a form of relaxation and recreation. It helps the practitioner find balance and rhythm.

Those who practice the art of juggling say it is rhythmic. For some, juggling can be a form of meditation, symbolic of one finding balance and harmony. The balls are in motion, but they move in perfect sequence — one following the other — seemingly effortlessly.

If you have ever watched a street performer, you know that the art of juggling and the challenges it presents can be endless. One begins with three small balls and can advance to torches of fire. The juggler can continue to challenge herself, constantly pushing her limits.

Most of all, juggling is fun! It is fun to watch, and it is fun to do! Our question today is, since you as student leaders will be juggling multiple tasks at once, how can you make juggling an experience that challenges rather than overwhelms you?

(Pause)

Have you ever noticed how life is sometimes like a balancing act? We often have to keep several things in balance at once — deadlines, family obligations, school assignments, fun with friends. If we concentrate too intently on one area — like friends, for example — we throw everything else off balance. When we are not in balance, we miss a beat, drop the ball and have to bend over to pick it up, find our balance and start again. The process of stopping, re-evaluating and starting over can be time-consuming and energy-draining. So you see, in addition to juggling, balance is also an important element in life.

Balancing Process

Each participant is given three playing cards. Students are asked to reflect on this question: “What three areas of your life do you personally need to juggle or keep in balance this year?”

Students are then asked to build a three-dimensional structure with their playing cards. Students should keep in mind that each of the playing cards represents one of the areas they need to juggle or keep in balance this year.

The group should then discuss the challenge of making the three-dimensional card structure. The discussion should include the following concepts:

- balance takes careful precision;*
- balance is fragile;*
- if things collapse, you can’t give up; you have to start over again; and*
- good balance provides support for all.*

Reading

“Tips for the Juggler or Very Busy Student Body Officer”

1. If at any time during the process of juggling or doing the work of an SBO, you feel tense, frustrated, or that nothing is working, stop, take a deep breath, close your eyes and calmly think through what you are trying to do. Begin again more slowly.
2. Try to avoid developing bad habits. If you notice that you are becoming lazy and beginning to take short cuts, stop, take note, and begin again.
3. In leadership as well as in juggling you must concentrate on what you are doing. Pay attention to the task at hand. Be present. If you are distracted, you’re likely to drop the ball.
4. Juggle or work with a friend. Make a pact with a friend that you will check on each other’s progress. Help one another avoid bad habits; encourage each other to keep growing and stretching.
5. Enjoy the learning process. Juggling and student leadership should be fun. Be patient with yourself when you make a mistake. Keep reminding yourself, “I’m learning, I’m learning!” Don’t let others discourage you with negative input. Don’t give up; the mastery of your skills may be just around the corner!

Closing Prayer

God of Mercy, as we enter this year as student officers, help us keep our wits about us and seek a proper sense of balance in all things. Be with us in times of frustration and confusion. Help us retrace our steps back to the center, which is always You. Help us encourage each other in the tasks we now take up. Help us be present in each moment, for that is where our lives are lived and You are most present.

Help us trust the gifts You have granted us. Give us the courage to take risks and stretch beyond our comfort zones. Keep us mindful that everyone at Mercy is learning how to juggle and trying to find balance in their lives. Help us be patient with ourselves and others when the ball is dropped or when we are overwhelmed with challenges. Help us seek joy in our learning and find rhythm and balance in our lives. Grant us Your peace and keep us in Your care.

Amen.

The Merciful Leader

Student Body Officers Installation Ceremony

Theme

Installation of student officers as merciful leaders

Materials

one candle for each current and newly elected student officer

matches

one copy of the Oath of Office per newly elected officer

Opening Song

“Circle of Mercy” by Jeanette Goglia

(available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/)

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Reflections

“The Merciful Leader”

As a Student Body Officer, you walk in the footsteps of all the women and men who have contributed generously to the vision and work of Mercy education. We trace that vision back to Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. During the early years of the Institute of Mercy, Catherine provided direction to the early Sisters, and the leaders among them, through her letters. Let us listen to Catherine’s words of guidance to the early Mercy community.

On the topic of leadership, Catherine wrote:

- “I have great confidence in you to do what you think best. State your opinion and always act with courage.”
- “Be ever ready to praise, to encourage, to stimulate, but slow to censure, and still more slow to condemn.”
- “We must not make too many laws. If we pull the strings too tight, they will break.”

Catherine described, further, the kind of attitude a person of Mercy should possess:

- “Draw persons to God by your words, by your example, and by the works of Mercy.”
- “Compassion should be our animating principle.”
- “Mercy ... pardons again and again.”
- “Be cheerful, animating all around you.”

— “We should be as shining lamps, giving light to all around us.”

Catherine McAuley provides a tall order for Mercy leadership. May you challenge yourselves to lead in the way of Mercy. May Catherine McAuley’s words be a source of inspiration and strength for you.

Installation Formula

Oath of Office

I, (name), promise to you, faculty, students and staff of Mercy High School, to fulfill my duties as your Student Body (position) for the (year) school year.

It is evident that you have faith in me, and I ask for your support as I begin my term as a Student Body Officer.

Before you today, I accept the responsibilities of Student Government throughout my term.

I promise to act with integrity. I promise to serve as your representative in all student government decisions. I promise to work with the other Student Body Officers for the well being and benefit of Mercy High School.

I do solemnly swear to fulfill all the duties that I now take up.

I ask God to guide me as I strive to keep the Mission of Mercy alive and your best interests at heart. I ask Catherine McAuley to watch over me as I attempt to become a merciful leader.

Candle Pass

Previous Student Body Officers light the candles of the newly elected officers.

Commissioning Blessing

The person giving the blessing should hold her hand over each student’s head while reciting the blessing. At the end of the blessing, the sign of the cross should be made over the student’s head.

(Student’s name), may God guide you, and may Catherine McAuley watch over you, as you serve this community of Mercy. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Prayer

“Magnificat of Mercy” by Catherine McAuley

Sweet Mercy! Soothing, patient, kind,
Softens the high and rears the fallen mind;
Knows with just rein and even hand to guide
Between false fear and arbitrary pride.

Not easily provoked, she soon forgives,
Feels love for all and, by a look, relieves.

Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives,
Removes our anguish and transforms our lives;
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each heart a little Heaven.

Celebrating



Catherine McAuley © Jen Norton.
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Celebrating

As Mercy Schools we have much to celebrate and be grateful for:

- We are enriched by the vision of Catherine McAuley that has been passed down to us.
- We participate in a proud history that spans more than 193 years.
- We are connected to a network of Mercy schools that extends throughout the United States and in six countries abroad.
- We participate in the ministry of Mercy education, which educates thousands of young people.
- We work and teach with others who share similar values.
- We are supported and cared for by those with whom we share this ministry.
- We have been touched, each in our own way, by the Mercy Mission.

When we come together for prayer, we must remind ourselves of our giftedness in Mercy and in one another. Our liturgies should be celebrations filled with joy, fun, laughter, tears and gratefulness.

Remember, it is a gift to be part of the living, breathing tradition of Mercy!

Catherine McAuley

Mercy Day Resource

I was first introduced to Catherine McAuley when I was in formation as a Sister of Mercy. During my time as a Sister, I continued to read and hear about her. Yet it was not until after I left the Sisters of Mercy and became the Campus Minister at Mercy High School that Catherine came alive for me.

It was through my attempts to introduce Catherine McAuley, the woman, to our students that I was challenged to look deeper into the eyes of the person who so placidly stared back at me in portraits that hung on the walls of our school. It was not until I began to open myself to her world, her personal history, and Catherine herself that I discovered a richness beyond words.

It was in my reading about Catherine that I discovered a living, breathing woman, deeply in touch with God, a servant of the poor who stepped into a world of poverty and despair. Catherine was a woman on the move, living out the gospel imperative of a “preferential option for the poor.” A clever entrepreneur, she was as comfortable among the wealthy as among those in need. She experienced a tremendous amount of loss in her life and became a friend to tears and a companion to grief.

Catherine’s brother described her as “one of the finest dancers in Dublin.” She was a playful sort who teased her novices and joined in the fun of the young at heart. During her lifetime she was called upon to become a guardian to several nieces, nephews and neighborhood orphans. A teacher committed to excellence, Catherine traveled to France to study educational methods and techniques. She was a woman of faith who allowed her life to unfold, a committed Catholic holding firm to her beliefs amid family pressure and anti-Catholic sentiments.

Catherine the foundress was loved by her sisters, opting to be called Mother Catherine instead of Reverend Mother. She was a leader who empowered her sisters to lead new foundations and who enjoyed decision-making in the community room rather than in the isolation of the superior’s office.

Catherine McAuley is a living, breathing reality who lives among us in our schools, a foundress in history and a contemporary role model for women and men of faith, a treasure worthy of reflection, and an outstanding role model for our students.

Biographical Sketch of Catherine McAuley

Mercy Day Resource

This biography was taken from Mercy International Centre's website (*mercyworld.org*) in 2001.

The Pathway Appears

Catherine McAuley was born in Dublin in 1778. Her father, James, earned a comfortable living through the building trade and provided well for his two daughters and his son. His compassionate spirit and charitable work for the poor in Dublin set an example for Catherine that remained with her throughout her life. His death in 1783 began a long period of instability for his survivors; his wife, Elinor, was not as financially astute as her husband, and the family gradually declined into a state of poverty, becoming dependent on the goodness of relatives. Elinor was deeply affected by her husband's death; she stopped practicing her faith, and when she contracted tuberculosis in 1798 she faced death consumed by fear and anxiety that had a profound effect on Catherine, remaining with her until late in life. Catherine — along with her brother, James, and sister, Mary — lived with William Armstrong and his family. There, under the strong influence of the Armstrong's Protestant faith, Mary and James stopped practicing their Catholic faith; yet Catherine held steadfastly to it despite the limitations of her religious education and regular questioning and ridicule.

Preparing for the Journey

In 1803 God's goodness manifested itself in the form of an invitation to take up residence with Catherine and William Callaghan, friends of the Armstrongs recently returned from India. Catherine was to be the companion of Mrs. Callaghan, who was in poor health, at their estate, Coolock House. This was to be a 20-year sojourn, a time of learning and deepening conviction. Here the tender power of mercy began to more clearly shape Catherine's life. She now had the opportunity to study and practice her faith freely. She could attend services and was instructed by local clergy in the tenets of her faith. Respecting the Callaghans' wishes not to display religious artifacts in their home, Catherine found the sign of the cross kneeling before the intersecting panels of her bedroom door and the interlacing branches of trees. Inspired by the memory of her father, Catherine began catechetical instruction among the servants in the Callaghan home and taught needlework in the poor school on Abbey Street, opening a small shop to sell the pupils wares. As Mrs. Callaghan's health became more frail, she took great comfort in Catherine's hourly reading of the scriptures. Ultimately inspired by the gentle devotion of her loving care giver, Catherine Callaghan converted to Catholicism. She died, as did a cousin of Catherine's soon after, leaving two small children to Catherine's care in Coolock House. As William Callaghan's health began to fail, he asked Catherine what use she might make of an inheritance, to which she responded that she would provide protection and education for servant girls. As Mr. Callaghan prepared for death, Catherine became concerned for his spiritual well-being. Eventually he consented to having a priest visit him on occasion, and as a result he converted to Catholicism the day before his death on November 10, 1822. Upon his death Catherine inherited his estate.

A Direction Chosen

Catherine began to implement her plan; and now able to think in broader terms due to her inheritance, she extended her vision to include a wide range of services for poor women and children. In 1824, she leased property at the corner of Herbert and Baggot Streets in the heart of affluent Dublin. Her hope was that those whom God had blessed with material security would thus be moved to support and perhaps join in her service. During the three years the building was being erected, Catherine prepared herself for the years ahead by studying educational methods in France and Ireland, also becoming an instructor at St. Mary's Poor School in Dublin. She continued to oversee the management of Coolock House while awaiting its sale. Her sister, Mary, died in 1827 and her husband two years later, leaving Catherine the guardian of their five children. The house on Baggot Street became ready for occupancy on September 24, 1827. By coincidence or act of providence, this was also the date of the feast of Our Lady of Mercy; and thus they claimed an identity and a spirit for their building and its works, naming it the House of Mercy. Over the next three years, the House of Mercy and its works flourished. The first year saw two hundred girls enrolled in the school; to the ministry of education were added the visitation of the sick poor and the refuge for young women. Many volunteers, inspired by Catherine's work and spirit, joined their energies to hers.

A Path Named Mercy

A core group of twelve women lived at Baggot Street in these early years, living simply and over time dressing similarly, light-heartedly calling one another "sister." The question of their status gradually became serious, and the Archbishop of Dublin and several others among Catherine's friends and advisors encouraged them to establish a religious congregation. Once satisfied that their work among the poor would remain central to their endeavors, Catherine McAuley, Anna Maria Doyle and Elizabeth Harley went to the Presentation Convent of Dublin to begin their novitiate. Catherine was 52 years of age. Fifteen months later, on December 12, 1831, the three novices professed their vows, thus giving birth to the Sisters of Mercy. Catherine stated the principal aims of the Congregation as "to educate poor girls, to lodge and maintain poor young women who are in danger ... and to visit the sick poor." What had begun as a dream now took its place, through the beneficence of William Callaghan and the urging of the Church, as the central purpose of the new order.

The Pathway Branches

The rate of growth these principles nurtured was nothing short of phenomenal. As Catherine's passion for the poor took root in the hearts of companions, her charism of Mercy spread across Ireland and England. In the ten years between the founding of the order and her death, Catherine founded nine Convents of Mercy. The first was in Tullamore in April 1836, where a pattern that was later carried on to many subsequent foundations was established. Tullamore was chosen because it suffered severe poverty. "If we don't take Tullamore, no other community will," she declared, relying as usual on her Provident God to prosper the work and provide for the sisters. Over the next five years, Convents of Mercy were established in the Irish towns of Charleville, Carlow, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Birr. Bermondsey and Birmingham in England were

also among Catherine's foundations. She would in all cases remain with the new foundation for its first month, assisting in the establishment of the ministry and leading the thirty days of prayer. Another custom begun in Tullamore was the holding of a public profession ceremony to introduce the public to the work and vocation of the order and to inspire other young women to join them in their efforts. Time after time she was to deplete the number of sisters at Baggot Street to respond to a need urgently expressed. She placed her whole confidence in God, who rewarded her generosity in kind.

In a letter to Sister Elizabeth Moore in 1839, Catherine wrote: "We have now gone beyond 100 in number, and the desire to join seems rather to increase; though it was thought the foundations would retard it, it seems quite otherwise. There has been a most Providential Guidance, which the want of prudence, vigilance, or judgement has not impeded, and it is here that we can most clearly see the designs of God." In another letter to Sister Elizabeth two years later, she described the spirit that characterized the congregation and its members: "All are good and happy. The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us and oh what a blessing, it should make all else pass into nothing. All laugh and play together, not one cold stiff soul appears. From the day they enter, reserve of any ungracious kind leaves them. This is the spirit of the Order, indeed the true spirit of Mercy flowing on us...."

A Step Towards Eternity

Catherine's health began to decline in 1841, and it was during her last trip to a new foundation in Birmingham that she began to make preparations for her last days, secure in the knowledge that the Holy See had granted confirmation of the Rule and her congregation was firmly established. The fear she had held of death for so long since her mother's death had blessedly faded. She died on November 11, 1841, at Baggot Street and was laid to rest, according to her wishes, in the ground with the poor.

Timeline of Catherine McAuley's Life

Mercy Day Resource

1777 James McGauley, a Catholic builder in Dublin, Ireland, married Elinor Conway, who was much younger. The McGauleys lived at Stormanstown House in North County, Dublin. ("James *McGauley* was the form of his name used by James in all extant signatures. Catherine followed the form *McAuley* used by her mother in her widowhood; throughout her life Catherine remained under the impression that her father had favoured this spelling." Roland Burke-Savage, *Catherine McAuley: The First Sister of Mercy*. Dublin: McGill and Son Ltd., 1949.)

September 29, 1778 Birth of Catherine McAuley

Birth of Mary, Catherine's sister (birthdate unknown)

During Catherine's early years, her father modeled for her a concern and love for the poor. James invited poor children to Stormanstown House on Sundays for meals and religious instruction.

April 1783 Birth of James William, Catherine's brother

July 1783 James McGauley Sr. died at the age of sixty. Catherine was five years old.

Mismanagement of the McAuley estate resulted in the selling-off of parcels of Stormanstown land and the dwindling of the family's financial resources.

1784 Elinor and the children moved to Glasnevin in suburban Dublin.

1787 The family moved again, to Queen Street in Dublin.

Catherine received Confirmation and First Communion at St. Paul's in Arran Quay.

1796 Elinor sold the house on Queen Street and moved with her children into the home of her brother, Dr. Owen Conway.

1798 Elinor McAuley died, leaving her children with few financial resources.

Mary and James went to live with William Armstrong, Elinor's cousin. Catherine stayed at the Conway House. Catherine and her cousin Anne Conway began organizing outings to help the poor, visit the sick, and teach the children of Dublin. Catherine met Fr. Betagh, SJ, under whom she studied scripture.

1800 Owen Conway went bankrupt. As a result of the bankruptcy, Catherine personally experienced poverty and hunger.

1801 To relieve the burden on the Conways, Catherine rejoined her sister and brother at the Armstrongs. There Catherine experienced anti-Catholic sentiments from the Protestant Armstrongs and their friends. In response, Catherine came to a deeper realization of the need to become more knowledgeable and articulate about her faith. Catherine took up her own study of Catholicism. While living with the Armstrongs, Catherine was introduced to the Callaghans, acquaintances of theirs.

1803 Catherine was invited to live with the Callaghans at Coolock House in suburban Dublin.

Catherine met Fr. Armstrong and Fr. Blake, both of whom later became strong supporters of her work. She took an interest in helping the servant girls at Coolock House and other surrounding houses. She continued her works for the poor, visiting the sick and elderly from Coolock House. Mrs. Catherine Callaghan became ill. Catherine McAuley took over the responsibility of running Coolock House and caring for Mrs. Callaghan.

1804 Catherine's sister married Willy *Maccauley*, who later became a surgeon at the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham. Mary and Willy eventually had five children.

Catherine's cousin Anne Conway married and became Anne Conway Byrn. (Anne's two daughters, Teresa [Catherine's God-child] and Catherine, later entered the Mercy community.)

1819 Catherine Callaghan died.

1821 Catherine's brother, James (now a doctor), married Francis Ridgeway.

By 1822 Catherine was caring for four orphans — two from the Coolock village and two children of the deceased Ann Conway Byrn, Catherine and Teresa.

William Callaghan died. He left the Coolock House and his entire estate to Catherine,

A young domestic servant girl being threatened by her employer came to Catherine for help. Catherine sought help for her but to no avail. The young girl was victimized. Catherine was deeply moved by this event, and the seeds for providing housing and job training for young women were planted.

July 1824 Construction began on the Baggot Street House of Mercy.

Catherine taught daily at the Parochial Poor School on Middle Abbey Street.

1825 Catherine traveled to France to study the educational system there. Her sister, Mary Macauley, became ill. Catherine went to Kilmainham to care for her sister and her children.

August 1827 Mary Macauley died.

Catherine remained at Kilmainham to care for Mary's five children: Mary, James, Robert, Catherine and William, ages sixteen to five.

September 24, 1827 House of Mercy opened as a school, shelter for homeless girls, and later an employment training center for young women.

Anna Maria Doyle and Catherine Byrn became the first helpers to move into the House of Mercy. Frances Warde and Ann O'Grady arrived shortly thereafter.

May 1828 Catherine moved into the House of Mercy.

Catherine's friend Fr. Armstrong died.

January 1829 Catherine's brother-in-law, Willy Macauley, died.

Catherine took on the responsibility of caring for the five Macauley children. At this point Catherine became the guardian of at least nine children, having custody already of two of the Bryn children, Catherine and Teresa, and at least two other children, Ellen Corrigan and Anne Rice.

1829 Elizabeth Harley joins the community at the House of Mercy.

1830 Archbishop Daniel Murray encouraged Catherine to enter religious life in order to bring stability and ensure a future for her work and the House of Mercy.

September 8, 1830 Catherine entered the Presentation Convent at George's Hill in Dublin at the age of fifty-two. Anna Maria Doyle and Elizabeth Harley accompanied Catherine to the novitiate.

December 12, 1831 The three novices took their vows, giving birth to the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

The Sisters returned to Baggot Street after fifteen months of novitiate.

January 1832 Seven more women entered the community, including Catherine's niece Mary (Macauley), and Anne Conway Byrn's daughter Catherine.

1832 Sisters Elizabeth Harley and Ann O'Grady died.

1832 Sisters of Mercy took over the Townsend Street Centre for the purpose of nursing cholera victims. Many of the Sisters suffered long-term health problems because of their exposure to cholera. In the following years, many Sisters died at young ages.

1833 Death of Catherine's niece Mary Macauley.

Catherine did her part to encourage a new style of religious life that was emerging in Dublin. The Sisters of Mercy, who left the enclosure of the convent to serve people in need, were referred to by the people of Dublin as "the walking Sisters."

January 1834 Catherine's niece Catherine Macauley entered the community.

August 1837 Catherine Macauley died.

1841 During the last ten years of Catherine's life, the Sisters of Mercy membership grew to 142 women. The congregation gave birth to fourteen foundations — twelve in Ireland and two in England.

April 1841 Catherine's nephew James Macauley died.

June 6, 1841 Rome granted its approval of the new congregation.

November 11, 1841 Catherine died of tuberculosis at the age of 64.

November 15, 1841 Catherine was laid to rest in the garden of the House of Mercy on Baggot Street.

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Prayers of Catherine McAuley

Mercy Day Resource

Suscipe

My God, I am Yours for time and eternity.
Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms
of Your loving Providence with the most lively, unlimited
confidence in Your compassionate, tender pity.

Grant me, O most Merciful Redeemer, that whatever You
ordain or permit may be acceptable to me.

Take from my heart all painful anxiety;
suffer nothing to sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me
but the hope of coming to the possession of You, my God and my all,
in Your everlasting Kingdom.

Amen.

Magnificat of Mercy

Sweet Mercy! Soothing, patient, kind —
softens the high and rears the fallen mind;
knows with just rein and even hand to guide
between false fear and arbitrary pride.

Not easily provoked, she soon forgives;
feels love for all and by a look relieves.

Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives,
removes our anguish and transforms our lives;
lays the rough paths of peevish nature even —
and opens in each heart a little Heaven.

Quotes from Catherine McAuley

Mercy Day Resource

Education

No work of charity can be more productive of good to society or more conducive to the happiness of the poor than the careful instruction of women ... since whatever station they are destined to fill, their example and their advice will always have great influence; and wherever a God-fearing woman presides, peace and good order are generally found.

Compassion should be our animating principle when undertaking instruction with children and adults, since they are made in God's image.

Be ever ready to praise, to encourage, to stimulate, but slow to censure, and still more slow to condemn.

Let us fit the children for earth without unfitting them for heaven.

Justice/Action

I have great confidence in you to do what you think best. State your opinion and always act with courage.

Draw persons to God by your words, by your example, and by the works of Mercy.

Let us never desire more than enough.

Let charity be your badge of honor.

Do all you can for God, because time is short.

The poor need help today, not next week.

My legacy to the institute is charity.

While we place all our confidence in God, we must act as if all depended on ourselves.

There are things the poor prize more highly than gold though they cost the donor nothing: the kind word; the gentle, compassionate look; and the patient hearing of sorrows.

Try to meet all with peace and ease.

It is better to relieve a hundred imposters, if there be such, than to suffer one really distressed person to be sent away empty.

Never command anything which you yourself have not practiced.

The proof of love is deed.

It is for God we serve the poor and not for thanks.

God knows I would rather be cold and hungry than that the poor should be deprived of anything in my power to give.

Prayer

You are a God of love and tenderness; I put my trust in You.

Our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God.

God never refuses grace to those who ask it.

Let us pray well, and never grow weary.

Above all things, constant, fervent prayer.

Prayer will do more than all the money in the Bank of Ireland.

Reconciliation

Pray fervently to God to take all bitterness from me.

Mercy ... pardons again and again.

The only return God asks of us is a return of love.

Be slow to censure, and slower still to blame.

O most compassionate Lord, take from my heart all painful anxiety.

The world would be a happy place if people's manners were as good as their hearts.

How can we teach the love of God if our hearts are cold?

Miscellaneous

Remember me affectionately to all.

Put your whole confidence in God. He will never let you want.

Preserve union and peace. Do this and your happiness will be so great as to cause you to wonder.

Although I should be simple as a dove, I must also be prudent as a serpent.

Practice great tenderness in all things.

God can bend and change, form and reform, any of His creatures to fit them for the purposes He designs.

Amidst all this tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place — centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.

The Sisters will be tired; see that they have a comfortable cup of tea when I'm gone.

This is your life, joys and sorrows mingled, one succeeding the other.

We have ever relied on Divine Providence and shall continue to do so.

We should be as shining lamps, giving light to all around us.

May God make you the instrument of His glory.

Be cheerful, animating all around you.

The great adage “Never too old to learn” is a great comfort to me.

Quotes About Catherine

She is the woman who once found a demented woman alone and impoverished in a hovel and brought her home to Coolock; who once found an orphaned child thrown into the street and brought her home; who once during the 1832 cholera epidemic wrapped an orphaned infant in her own shawl and brought her home, to a little bed in her own room; and who in the course of fourteen years on Baggot Street welcomed ‘more than a thousand’ such strangers through her Georgian front door – often sixty at a time.

Excerpt from *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* by Mary C. Sullivan, RSM.

She brought her heart to misery. By courageous, contagious concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor, the sick, and the ignorant, she broke through the impossibilities of her time. She animated many to walk with her. She animated others at centres of wealth, power, and influence to share in her heroic efforts.

She connected the rich to the poor
the healthy to the sick
the educated and skilled to the uninstructed
the influential to those of no consequence
the powerful to the weak
to do the work of God on earth.

Excerpt from *Tender Courage: A Reflection on the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley, First Sister of Mercy* by Joanna Regan & Isabelle Keiss.

The spirit of mercy and compassion which animated her and, as it were, consumed her, made her sometimes adopt plans for their relief which to some appeared beyond the limits of prudence, but the success with which her undertakings were usually attended show that she was guided by a heavenly wisdom.

Bermondsey Annals

Mercy Poetry

Unless otherwise noted, all the poetry in this book is by the author, Sandy Flaherty. I grant permission to make minor adaptations to fit your particular school's needs.

Mercy at Seventeen

Mercy rises in the morning to an alarm that rings much too early. With an eye to the day, she packs an apple and some dollar bills for the homeless she'll pass along the way.

She enters the side door, greeting friends and passing smiles to those she's never met.

During a quick stop at her locker, she meets a friend; tears and heartache slow Mercy's pace, preparing her to listen.

Mercy slides into homeroom just under the bell, ready to promote the upcoming soup supper and the basketball game after school.

As she passes from English to U.S. History, her gentleness puts us at ease, and her sense of humor brings laughter into our sometimes gloomy hallways.

In Religion class, Mercy is thoughtful and articulate; she speaks her mind when need be, yet she respects the silences that sustain us.

Mercy moves through the cafeteria at lunch enjoying the company of many, not limiting herself or others, to who's who and where we should all sit.

Mercy remembers the name of the new girl and the birthday of the janitor's son. Her presence draws us closer together, her grace reminds us that we all belong.

Mercy is one of us, and yet she is the sum of all of us
when we are at our best ...
our most gracious ...
most Christ-like.

*Remembering
Ann Marie Murphy
Class of 1978
Mercy High School
San Francisco*

A Mercy School

If we are to honor our history,
Implement our vision,
And live out our mission,

We must echo the tenderness of Christ Jesus,
The courage of Catherine McAuley,
And the dreams of those who have gone before us.

We must gather the young,
Welcome the stranger,
And teach as Jesus did.

We must create hallways of compassion,
Lesson plans of justice,
And diplomas that impel.

If we are to answer the call put before us,
We must create a school
Whose soul is Mercy.

Kinsale Harbor

In 1854 a vision of Mercy was set aswim across an ocean.
Eight women arrived ashore carrying our inheritance.

Laying foundations for realities that they would never know or dream,
They gave voice to the song of Mercy in our lives.

We are the generations they could not foresee.
We are the hands of Mercy to come.
We are the vision of Mercy sent again,
Sent aswim on an ocean of dreams.

We lay foundations for those we cannot see.
We sing of Mercy to those whose names
We will never know.

Blessed are the Merciful

If we are to be counted among the Merciful,
Those courageous and blessed few,

We must be willing to expose our woundedness,
Whisper our sorrows,
And wait faithfully for Mercy's grace.

If we are truly women of Mercy,
We will be at ease amid the suffering of others
Only because we have first known the sorrow of our own souls.

Gracious Mercy

Oh Mercy, gracious Mercy,
You beckon us still.

Caressing us gently,
As you so often will.

May your tenderness hold us,
Comforting us through the night,

As your loving transforms us,
As one who has been gifted with sight.

Thus so healed,
Through compassion we do see.

Mercy awakened,
Our hearts set free.

Mercy

On cold wintery nights Mercy wanders through the city with warm blankets and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Holiday shoppers don't pay her any notice because she is quiet and moves with a gentle stride. When Mercy comes across a man sleeping in a doorway or a woman sitting on the street, she sits beside them and makes her home for awhile. Mercy is not frightened of the homeless, not since her friend compassion introduced her to empathy and courage.

Written by Emily Tyler, graduate of Mercy High School, Burlingame, class of 1997.

A Mercy Dawn

Asleep in its quiet slumber, a-chill and embraced by a misty fog of one San Francisco morning, the steamer Cortez arrived quietly,
docked without notice at the golden city's port.

Stepping into a morning still sleeping, Mercy walked off the ship and onto the Jackson Street pier. Sole possessions in hand, with memories of home to comfort and a mission not yet revealed, Mercy made her way up Montgomery Street, ushering in the rising of the sun and the dawning of a new day.

With eight thousand miles behind her and an Irish homeland still coveting her soul, she found Charity and welcome at the doors of little St. Patrick's church on Market Street. A simple greeting, yet timeless in its scope, Mercy met Charity in the company of hospitality and grace. In Patrick's sanctuary the two Sisters genuflected within the sacred and settled in for morning prayer.

Nourished by the Eucharistic encounter, Mercy and Charity emerged from morning Mass to find the city awake and expectant. On the front steps of the church, Charity introduced Mercy to the children of a city groaning into its own becoming.

A city's children tentatively hopeful, Mercy's compassion warming a chilly dawn, the morning greeting was soon interrupted, when a child named Providence reached through the pleasantries and took hold of the cross dangling at Mercy's skirts,

Tugging forcefully, coaxing her forward, pulling her into the crowd of poor gathered, commissioning her into the mission for which she had arrived. In the days to come Mercy would rise well before dawn, to touch the Source which is joy, to honor the Christ she had met as a child, to meet the Crucified One out in the streets, to cleave to the Resurrected One rising within.

And from the depths of that still point Mercy's sacred consolations enfolded the indigent poor, young women in search of their dignity, the imprisoned reaching for redemption, a city held hostage by cholera's violent grip.

And from that six room cottage on Vallejo Street, Compassion would stir, Mercy would rise, and pour out into the streets, down the aisle of ward seven at St. Mary's Hospital, into cell block three at San Quentin Prison, across the canvas floor of a tent in Golden Gate Park, onto the military base at the Presidio and into the rubble of the violent shaking of 1906 and beyond.

Amid the poor, among the sick, and with the suffering, Mercy did age in wisdom, beauty and grace, girt about with dignity and strength, embodying the dying and rising of our God.

She is mystery, yet rooted in earth. She is one of us, yet beyond us.
She is here with us now, yet a vision of what we hope to be. She is 1854, yet 2004.
She is 150 years old and so joyfully counting.

As She is, so are we here.

Arise, Sisters! Arise! Step into a morning still sleeping, usher in the rising of a new day.
Touch the source which is joy, cleave to the Christ who is yours.
Dawn, Mercy Sisters, dawn! Dawn the Mercy you were missioned to be!

Arise, Sisters, arise!
And behold the Mercy of our God!

(Written for the 150th Anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy in San Francisco)

Mercy Day

opening the side door
before the break of day
last minute preparations
still being made

half past eight
classmates arrive
hallways vibrating
excitement, laughter, pride

homeroom, roll-taking
a chaotic stream
practiced songs and dance rhythms
everyone's part of the Mercy team

gathering for prayer
we remember, we celebrate
one Christian body
in Mercy we all congregate

up to the rally
the volume rises
the laughter rolls
silly races, funny games
the energy refuses to be contained

suddenly, gratefully
by laughter and fun we are transformed
a dream, a school, a charism
a community of Mercy joyfully reborn

Mercy on the Street

If I were to see Mercy approaching on the street,
Surely I would recognize her eyes of compassion,
Her gentle presence and the familiar sound of her voice.

I would recognize the children gathering and pulling at her skirts,
The lonely looking on with ease,
The thoughtful double-takes of young women turning to watch in wonder.
I would recognize the smile, when finally she catches sight of me.

Surely our meeting would be filled with reminiscent stories of loved ones,
At table in a corner cafe,
A cup of tea between us,
Shared humor and Irish medleys,
A moment of presence amid history's unfolding symphony.

We would remember Ireland, Australia, South America
And — forever — Burlingame, for hers is an international communion.

I would seek within her the mystery of God's Mercy,
Meeting her gentle gaze with questions and affirmations.
I would savor her revelations quietly, intently,
Listening, reverencing, yielding,
Allowing her once again to autograph the parchment of my life.

I should be humbled by this stream of compassion,
This conduit of our coming into being,
This multi-generational psalm, treasured and recited by so many,
This woman of Mercy, speaking presently with me.

I should pray with her and through her,
Petitioning Mercy,
Ardent pleas,
Accessing the ever-deepening ocean of God's compassion, which lives within her.

Parting, we would sing a Suscipe of providence and praise,
A choral arrangement sung by thousands from these hundred some years.

Hence, our song would beckon the poor.
They would come running from their alleyways,
Their lived-in cars, their despairing darkness,
To this fountain of compassion, this sanctuary of peace,
This refuge of Mercy, that stands before me.

Reflection on a Wednesday Afternoon

What happens to you Mercy, when the copier cools down,
these students file out,
and the last one has closed her locker and gone home?

What happens to you Mercy, when these voices are silent,
when the laughter has died,
when we are off to errands, shopping and eventually home?

When the last note on the piano fades,
the lights are turned off,
and we close the door?

What happens to you Mercy, when your halls are empty
and only the memory of us remains in you?

Do you remember our stories?
Do our voices continue to reverberate in your halls?
Or do you stand silent, absorbing it all?

Do you miss us when we're gone?
Do you ponder History, English, Religion ... or [students' and/or teachers' names]?
Do you look forward to our return?
Or is it true, like so many believe, that you are just paint, flooring, plaster ... that you are completely unaware?

Unaware of us? But I am not of you.

I miss your doors, your painted walls, your creaks and groans.
Your voices reverberate in my walls.
Your silence is absorbed in me.

For without you, the place in which we gather, we cannot be Mercy.
You are our refuge, the place in which we laugh, love, forgive, fight, cry, and sometimes dance.

You are a classroom in which we learn about life.
You are a house set on a hill, which is a cornerstone in our lives.
You are desks, tiled floors, dysfunctional clocks, and red-painted doors.
You are a place, a memory, a passion, a dream.

Oh, if your walls could talk, what a story you'd tell!
Oh, if we could only listen, what a wonder it would be!

Rainy Day Mercy

Dark morning awoken, by splashes on the window sill
Alarm clock summons, no cancellation call from school

What to wear decision, rain coat, rubbery shoes
Out the door, in the car, umbrella remembered,
Funny how it's become such a jewel

Bright headlights beam, through sheets of watery rain
Puddles splashing, flowing back, as winter's momentum continues to gain

Wet hair, soggy skirt, puddles forming in my shoes
Bad hair day again — oh well, all girls, surely nothing more to lose

Warm classrooms welcome
Yet lessons seem ho hum
No lights hopeful, wanting more rains to come

Escape academia, let me go for a time
Let me wander in rain-soaked fields where we expect no reason or rhyme

Wind gales call me and question, what's it all for?
Sometimes life seems empty — why is it all such a bore?

Far away thoughts warm me, daydreaming seems a breeze
Winter months slow me and set my heart at ease

Rain, rain, come my way
Let my soul run and play

Water down, soak my heart
Like Noah, I'll build an ark

Watch me as I float down stream
Please don't wake me from this glorious dream

April showers seem to mount like towers
Somebody please bring me some flowers

Can you hear that little song?
Winter sings it loud and strong

Stay home, close in, pull the covers high
Rainy days call us to recognize and feel life's
Wintery sigh

Distant Voices

Distant voices,
quiet murmuring
and fragments of prayer

Beckoning us back,
easing us forward.

Mercy unfolds behind us
and before us.

Mercy reaches through the ages,
stepping out of history,

Shaping who we might be,
prompting what we could be,
Defining who we are.

Recipe for Mercy

For Mercy to be enduring and life-changing, follow this recipe:

- Pour 2 cups of hospitality into a large mixing-bowl. Add one tablespoon of compassion and 2-1/2 teaspoons of humor.
- Over time, add a comfortable cup of tea, topped off by 8 oz. of courage. Let set awhile. Then add 3 heaping tablespoons of love for the poor and equal measures of concern for women.
- Let mixture stand alone for a time until reflection and prayer have taken hold.
- When ingredients are ready, mix slowly, stirring gently. Then take the ingredients out of the bowl and send it into the streets; for the leaven of Mercy is sure to rise more quickly in the midst of God's people.

You Are Welcome

(This can be used as a Gathering Prayer.)

Those of you who are in this chapel for the first time,
Those of you who just sent a child to college,
Those of you who celebrate Mercy daily,
You are welcome.

Those of you who have illness in your family,
Those of you who return to troubled homes,
Those of you who need to be thanked,
You are welcome.

Those of you who awaken each morning to the beauty of the day,
Those of you who are overwhelmed,
Those of you who ask why,
You are welcome.

Those of you who seek justice and peace,
Those of you who hope to find love,
Those of you who have come to celebrate,
You are welcome.

You are welcome to this liturgy.
You are welcome to this community of Mercy.
You are welcome to this vision.
You are welcome to the tender love of God.

We Gather and Remember

(This can be used as a Gathering Prayer.)

Deeply rooted in a rich heritage
Sustained by a 193 year tradition
Grounded by a community of friends
Diverse in culture
United in faith

We gather around this table
We remember a woman named Catherine
We celebrate the God of Mercy

Mercy Day Scripture Readings

Gospel Readings

Beatitudes	Matthew 5:1-13
The Works of Mercy	Matthew 25:31-41
Teaching about Charity	Matthew 6:1-5
Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-33
Good Samaritan	Luke 10:30-38
Humility and Hospitality	Luke 14:7-15
The Healing at the Pool	John 5:1-14
The Lost Sheep	Luke 15:1-8, Matthew 18:10-15
The Raising of Lazarus	John 11:28-45
The Sower and the Seed	Mark 4:3-10
Woman Anoints Jesus	Luke 7:36-40, 44-50
Magnificat	Luke 1:39-57
Love for Enemies	Luke 6:27-37

Hebrew Scriptures

I am too young ...	Jeremiah 1:4-11
Your ways, O Lord, make known to me ...	Psalms 25:4-14
For everything there is a season ...	Ecclesiastes 3:1-9
He will bring justice ...	Isaiah 42:1-10
I have called you by name ...	Isaiah 43:1-5
Share your bread with the hungry ...	Isaiah 58:6-10
Arise, shine, your light has come ...	Isaiah 60:1-6
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ...	Isaiah 61:1-5
God is our refuge ...	Psalms 46:1-7
Have mercy on me, O God ...	Psalms 51:1-13
Make a joyful noise to God ...	Psalms 66:1-9
How lovely is Your dwelling place ...	Psalms 84:1-9

Epistles

Every time I pray, I thank God for you ...	Philippians 1:3-12
Love is patient and kind ...	1 Corinthians 13:1-14
There are many gifts ...	1 Corinthians 12:4-12
The body has many parts ...	1 Corinthians 12:12-27
Clothe yourself with heartfelt mercy ...	Colossians 3:12-17
Maintain the unity among you ...	Ephesians 4:1-8
I have heard of your faith ...	Ephesians 1:15-20
Be like Christ ...	Philippians 2:1-9

Additional Readings for Mercy Day

A Woman of Mercy

This reading was created by the students and staff of Mercy High School Burlingame. Each member of our school community was asked to describe, in a few sentences, a woman of mercy. Sentences and phrases were chosen, put together in a liturgical reading format, and read at our Mercy Day Liturgy. This reading is given as an example of what can be accomplished by this simple process.

The first reading is taken from the writings of the students and staff of Mercy High School.

I believe my mother is a merciful woman. Why? Because if you looked up the word *merciful* in the dictionary, she would fit the definition. She is one of my best friends, a mother as well as idol for me. She doesn't judge others; she listens, and she will always give you her honest opinion. There is so much to say, yet I don't have the words Mom, I love you, and you will always have a place in my heart.

I believe Coretta Scott King is a woman of mercy because, after her husband's death, she took over his work and spread the word of non-violence and equal rights.

My mother, Elizabeth, is merciful. She is compassionate, understanding and forgiving. My mother has been through a lot and suffered a lot. Sometimes I wonder how she does it? I could never be like her. I'm glad she is my mother. Through thick and thin she has been there for me.

My sister Joyce is one the most merciful women I know. She helps all of us keep our sense of humor and laugh! I love her, and I'm very glad she is my sister.

I believe that Mother Teresa was a merciful woman because she sacrificed her life for the poor. She loved, cared and sheltered the homeless and sick.

In short, a woman of mercy is a strong, loving woman. She freely shows compassion for others. She loves unconditionally. A woman of mercy makes us feel special, teaches us to be proud of who we are, and never loses faith. She is always there to listen, she brings joy into the lives of others, and most of all she loves.

These are our words,
The word of the Lord living within us.

Thanks be to God.

A Time for Mercy

Most people are quite familiar with the reading from the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-9. People are so familiar with this reading that with a bit of help they can recite it from memory.

To create a more interactive reading of this passage, invite the congregation to join in the recitation. Begin the reading as usual; not too far into it, say to the congregation, "You know this!" Then proceed with the reading and invite them to participate at the parts underlined. When they begin to feel more comfortable, add lines with events from their daily lives and ask them to create their own spontaneous conclusion to the phrases (see the underlined blanks).

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven;
A time to be born, and a time to die, (*"You know this!"*)
A time to kill, and [*pause briefly*] a time to heal,
A time to weep, and a time to laugh,
A time to mourn, and a time to dance,

A time to eat liver, _____
A time to fall in love, _____
A time to study, _____
A time to fight, _____

A time to welcome freshmen, a time to say goodbye to seniors,
A time to keep silent, and a time to speak,
A time to love, and a time for hate,
A time for war, and a time for peace,
A time for judgment, and a time for Mercy.

This is the truth of our lives,
The word of the Lord living within us.
Thanks be to God.

The Quality of Mercy

The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's,
When mercy seasons justice.

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

May the Door of This Home ...

May the door of this home be wide enough to receive all who are lonely for friendship. May it welcome all who have cares to unburden, thanks to express, hopes to nurture.

May the door of this house be narrow enough to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity. May its threshold be no stumbling block to young or strained feet.

May it be too high to admit complacency, selfishness and harshness. May this home be, for all who enter, the doorway to richness and a more meaningful life.

The Siddur of Shir Chadash

Mercy

The time has come for Mercy. Mercy dissolves our illusion of power over others who really are members with us, of one cosmic body. Mercy reconciles. Mercy permeates the boundaries of tribal mentality and joins us to one another at the level of existence. Therefore Mercy unlocks the passage to a new age, a new way of being ourselves and being human, of which Jesus was the prototype.

Mercy proceeds from the Holy One through the soul of each individual. It cannot be institutionally mandated. If we experience institutions as merciful, it is because of the combined Mercy of the people who make up the institution.

The pattern of Mercy winds through the weave of creation. In women's spirituality Mercy begins among us, in the weave of women. Mercy begins toward myself, then with mother, daughter, sister, friend, and the one who is not really the enemy but rather the mirror for that part of myself or of reality toward which I have not been merciful. From the weave of women, Mercy will extend to our fathers, husbands, brothers and sons.

Divine wisdom is recognized by the attribute of Mercy. She is loving kindness, the beckoning of highly creative mystery within us. She is the heart of Christ. Mercy cannot be repressed forever, and out of her beatitude a new pattern will form. From wisdom's merciful weaving, true Christianity is, even now, taking shape in the world.

Weber, Christin Lore. *Blessings: A Woman's Reflection on the Beatitudes*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

Mercy

Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church "has an endless desire to show mercy."

"*Misericordia Vultus*" by Pope Francis, 2016

Mercy Day Blessing

May the blessing of mercy carry us through each day. May mercy be tattooed on our hearts and minds to speak the truth in love as we go about the ministry of our life. May mercy be sown deeply in our souls, core to our identity, who we are in mercy. May Mercy invite mercy to be the prophetic voice in this moment of time.

May the word of God that is in our hearts spill mercy over Earth to light the way toward peace. May mercy be seeded in our hearts sown and cultivated by the work of our lives. May we know we are the body of Christ one mercy ... women open to respond to the needs of our time ... “My God, I am yours for time and eternity.”

May God use our hands to feed the hungry, to build community; Our eyes to see the needs of others, to hear the cries that are carried in the wind across oceans and desert lands and in our cities, to speak tenderness and love, to be mercy here and now. May we bless the other in mercy over and over and over again.

Mercy Day 2016 | Jubilee year

www.sistersofmercy.org/files/images/resources/spirituality/Mercy-Day-Blessing.pdf, 2018

Mercy Day Partner Blessing

(Invite participants to choose partners and stand facing one another.)

God of Mercy, we stand before You today as a community to ask for Your blessing. We pray that Your love will be reflected in our words, Your compassion will show forth in our attentive listening, Your peace will live in our hearts, and your Mercy will be the work of our hands.

(Invite participants to place one hand over their partner's head.)

As we celebrate Mercy Day today, let us be mindful of how we speak to one another. We pray that we will speak from a place of courage, that our sharing will be in truth. We pray that as a community we will offer words of encouragement and that our words may always reflect a spirit of dignity and respect for others. God of Mercy, bless our speech, the everyday chatter of our lives, transforming our words into the song of Your peace.

(Invite participants to place one hand near their partner's ear.)

God of love, help us be good listeners. Help us be fully present to one another in good times and bad. Help us listen with our hearts as well as our ears. God of Mercy, give us the strength to listen carefully to the needs of all Your people.

(Invite participants to place one hand on their partner's shoulder.)

We pray that our experience of Mercy will open our hearts and make us more loving and compassionate people. We pray that our hearts will be big enough to hold the concerns and fears of our friends, and courageous enough to hold in love those in need. Help us open our hearts to those who are homeless, those who are sick, and those in need of our prayers. Give us hearts of flesh, tender enough to show Your Mercy. Let the community we know draw us beyond ourselves, to offer love to the friends we have yet to meet.

(Invite participants to hold their hands out in front of them.)

Tender God, as a community of Mercy we pray for Your blessing. We pray that the work of our hands will forever be a sign of Mercy among Your people. Help us reach out to each other in times of suffering and pain. Help us give of our time and talents to those who are in need. We pray that our hands will be instruments of peace, bringing forth Mercy.

(Invite participants to trace the sign of the cross on their partner's palm.)

We make the sign of the cross on the palms of the hands of our friends. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Invite participants to face front.)

Holy Spirit, we experience Your presence among us. We are gifted in this community with the Spirit of Your love and its action in our lives. Enable us to bring the spirit of Mercy to others. Help us live in the spirit of Your goodness and love.

May Your peace be reflected in our words.

May Your love find a home in our hearts.

May Your Mercy be the work of our lives.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mercy Day Art Projects and Other Activities

Mercy Pic Collage

Ask each Religion section to reflect, discuss, decide on, and then create a digital symbol that to them represents Mercy.

When all the sections have sent in their symbols, they can be arranged in a visually pleasing fashion using the *Pic Collage app*. During the liturgy ask a student from each section to come forward and explain their symbol.

“Hands of Mercy” Photo Collage

Invite students to take photographs of people participating in the works of Mercy. Students can print out their images and bring their pictures to class and paste them on posterboards along with any quotes they deem appropriate. When the posterboards are completed, hang them out in the corridor under the title “The Hands of Mercy.”

Suscipe Prayerbook

My friend Angie Simonetti, Campus Minister at Mercy High School Burlingame, has had wonderful results when she has asked the students in her Religion classes to create prayerbooks. This same concept would work nicely with Catherine McAuley’s “Suscipe Prayer.”

Invite students to create a Suscipe Prayerbook using *google slides*. Participants would copy *decoratively* the Suscipe Prayer, one line per slide. When the inscription of the Suscipe Prayer has been completed, students can add pictures or quotes that illustrate the phrase inscribed on each page.

“Works of Mercy” Mural

Invite students and staff members to acknowledge their works of mercy for the three weeks prior to Mercy Week. As individuals participate in works of mercy, have them write a four-sentence description of each one and post it on a wall mural entitled “Works of Mercy.” Participants could also add pictures of their good deeds to liven up the mural’s presentation.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry.

Give drink to the thirsty.

Clothe the naked.

Shelter the homeless.

Visit the sick.

Visit the imprisoned.

Bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel the doubtful.

Instruct the ignorant.

Admonish the sinner.

Comfort the sorrowful.

Forgive injuries.

Bear wrongs patiently.

Pray for the living and dead.

Engaging other Mercy Schools

Contact another Mercy school, preferably one far from your own. Make arrangements for your students and those at the other school to send emails to each other describing school life and Mercy Day activities. This activity brings home the fact that there are Mercy schools all over the United States and in six countries abroad and creates an enjoyable forum for deepening our appreciation for Mercy traditions. You might also consider a Skype chat with another school. If you choose this option have your class prepare for the discussion with questions so the conversation is dynamic and precious time isn't wasted.

Prayer Partners with Elderly Sisters

Look for the nearest Sister of Mercy retirement community and ask the Sisters if they would like to become "prayer partners" with your students during September (for Mercy Day) or during Advent. The Sisters and students can pull names from a hat and write a simple letter of introduction to each other.

If possible, try to take your students to meet the Sisters personally. We did this at Mercy Burlingame, and it was an invaluable experience for our students!

Mercy Day Skits

General Director's Notes

Use

The following skits were written to be used in Mercy Day celebrations. They would be most useful for student assemblies, rallies, prayer services or the Religion classroom.

Casting

When choosing which students will participate in skits, it is helpful to keep a few things in mind. Students who are extraverted and at ease in front of a group will likely do the best job in adapting the skit to your particular audience, and their performance skills are usually better than most. Try to enlist the help of many different students from all areas of school life. In doing so, the student body will be assured that you don't play favorites and everyone is welcome to participate. This will encourage students to come forward and volunteer their services. Involving a greater variety of students also creates Mercy Day celebrations that are a real reflection of your school community.

Staging

For considerations of time, simplicity and focus on the theme, I believe it is best for costuming and props to be left to a minimum.

One of the most important elements in staging skits is to be sure that the audience/congregation can see and hear everything. Many students are not used to projecting their voices loud enough for the entire group to hear every word, so some thought should be given to using microphones. Even if the actors have to hold hand mikes and pass them around (the audience/congregation will eventually forget about the microphones), it is better than parts of the dialogue being missed. Remember, if the audience/congregation can't hear what's going on, they will get frustrated and stop listening!

Adapting

Although the following skits were written for Mercy High School Burlingame, the scripts can easily be adapted for any school by changing a few names, dates and descriptions. It always makes a skit more entertaining to tailor it to your own school's experience, such as adding teachers' names and other specific details.

In rehearsing skits with students, one should always allow them to interpret the script and characterizations, adding their own phrases, jokes and nuances to make the skit more contemporary and enjoyable.

The Letter

Characters

three students
one teacher

Characterizations

Desiree — The Romantic
Missy — The Tough Kid
Stacey — The Nervous Nelly

Props

old trunk
old habit, or black material
old photographs
“old letters” on which the script is printed so actors can read them during performance

Setting

The beginning of the skit is not scripted and actors should improvise the introduction, which should include the following scenario:

The actors are on a break in the cafeteria, and Missy suggests they go up to the fourth floor (a restricted area) to see what’s happening up there. Stacey warns the group that they might get caught, but Missy convinces them to go anyway.

Action Begins

Characters quietly sneak up towards center stage. Characters mime picking the lock of the door leading to the fourth floor hallway. They enter one of the rooms and find an old trunk. The characters open the trunk and pull out an old habit and “improv” a bit with the habit.

Teacher: Is there someone up here? Students are not allowed on the fourth floor!

(Characters hide until the teacher is gone. Characters find and pull out some old photographs from the trunk. They improv with the photographs.)

Stacey: Look you guys! Look at these old letters. Wow, look how old they are!

(Stacey pulls letters out of the trunk; group sits down and begins reading them.)

Desiree: Oh my God! Maybe they’re love letters from some guy!

Missy: Yeah, right!

Desiree: Look to see who signed them.

Missy: It looks like McAuley, Kate McAuley.

Desiree: McAuley!? Do you guys know who that is? That's that nun who founded the Sisters of Mercy! Oh my God, these letters were written in the 1800s! Look, the date on this one is September 24, 1855! *

Stacey: Who's it addressed to?

Missy: Well, it starts "Dear Baptist Russell...."* (*sarcastically*) Cool name!

Desiree: Come on, you guys know! Remember in Religion class? Catherine McAuley started the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland, and she sent Baptist Russell to San Francisco to spread the order here. They came during the Gold Rush Days. They were supposed to help out with the cholera epidemic in San Francisco.

Stacey: Well, let's read it! What else does it say?

Missy: "Dear Baptist Russell, Happy Mercy Day! I was so happy to receive your letter this morning letting us know that you arrived in San Francisco safely. The other Sisters and I were very worried."

Stacey: I wonder what they were worried about?

Desiree: Oh, the original ship that Baptist and the other Sisters were supposed to travel on sank, but the nuns took a different ship so they didn't get caught in the shipwreck.

Missy: How do you know all this stuff? You're such a geek!

Desiree: I happen to listen in class. And don't call me a geek!

Stacey: Keep on reading!

Missy: "The Sisters and I were saddened to hear how sick the people of San Francisco are from cholera. I am happy to hear that you were able to set up the clinic for them. We have been praying daily for an end to this terrible illness."

Stacey: What cholera epidemic?

Desiree: There was a cholera epidemic in San Francisco in the 1800s and many people died. The Sisters of Mercy nursed the sick. And to reward them, the city offered them free bus transportation for life.

Stacey: Wow, that would be so cool to get free rides all the time!

Missy: *(sarcastically)* Whatever. Let's see what else it says.

"When things have settled down a bit and you feel the epidemic is subsiding, I would like you to begin working on our plans for opening a school for young women. I'd like it to be a small school where each girl feels that she matters, that she is important — like we discussed earlier this month. The focus of the school should be to prepare young women and give them the skills they need for life. It should also be a place where each girl is given the opportunity to become her own person. Of course, there should be lots of fun activities like sports and social gatherings with young men. But most importantly, it should be a place where visitors and those new to the school feel welcome.

"The teachers should teach the girls the importance of a good education, but they should also try to instill in the girls a concern for those who are less fortunate.

"Baptist, when I think about the possibility of such a place, I get so excited! This has been a dream of mine for years — to open a Mercy High School, a place where young women can be educated fully. I wish I could be with you to help start the school myself, but my responsibilities here in Ireland make that impossible.

"Let me know as soon as you have found a site on which to build the school. In your last letter you wrote about a little town called Burlingame, with beautiful oak trees, nice weather and inexpensive land. Sounds great! Please check it out and get back to me. I have to go; some of the new novices are creating a disturbance in the library!"

Stacey: How is it signed?

Desiree: "Remember me affectionately to the Sisters. Love, Kate McAuley."

Missy: That is so cool! This letter is about the dream of Mercy, and here we are living it!

Desiree: You guys, we should show this letter to someone. This is like some kind of antique or something!

Stacey: No! We'll get in trouble for being up here!

Missy: You're such a geek! *(sarcastically)* I'm sure if we show this letter to [principal] she'll yell at us for being up here. Hey, maybe she'll be so excited about the letter that she'll reward us with free dress or something!

Desiree: That's hardly the point.

Missy: I know. Let's go show [principal]!

(Girls bring letter to the principal.)

Additional Idea

As the actors bring the letters to the school principal, the theme can be brought full circle by presenting a slide-show of *current* students and school activities to the sounds of Natalie Merchant's song "These are the Days" (*available on iTunes*).

**Baptist Russell was the leader of the first Sisters in California and is considered the California foundress.*

**Although Catherine had died by the time the Sisters of Mercy reached San Francisco, I used some poetic license to show Catherine's life time commitment to the education of young women.*

The Meeting

Characters

Mercy student #1
Mercy student #2
Mercy student #3
Mercy student #4
Mercy student #5
Catherine McAuley

Props

flashlights

Special Note

This skit would be most appropriately presented at a student assembly or rally.

Setting

It is the day before Mercy Day and seven friends skip Religion class to work on a skit about Catherine McAuley for Mercy Day.

Action Begins

Students sneak through the audience. They are excited, but nervous about getting caught. When they believe the coast is clear they begin to plan their skit about Catherine McAuley.

Catherine McAuley walks toward the students. The students think they are in trouble.

Formal Dialogue Begins

Catherine: What are you doing?

Students: Nothing!

Student #1: *(realizing they are busted)* Oh Sister, I know we are supposed to be in class but we are working on our skit for Mercy Day. Are we going to be in trouble? Oh please, I'm already on probation!

Student #2: *(to #1, disgusted with her groveling)* Would you relax!

Catherine: Oh, what fun! What is your skit about?

Student #1: *(relieved)* Oh, so you're not mad at us?

Catherine: No, You should probably be in class, but tell me more about your skit?

Student #3: Do you live down at the convent?

Catherine: No.

Students #3: Oh. Well, what's your name?

Catherine: My name is Catherine McAuley.

Student #4: *(with realization and in amazement, backing away in fear)* Oh my God! Do you know who that is?? Oh my God! She's the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy!!

Student #5: Isn't she supposed to be dead!? You know, she's that one they're always talking about. You know, that Catherine McAuley nun!

Catherine: Oh, please don't be afraid. I would never hurt you. I belong here. I come around every Mercy Day to be a part of your celebration.

(students still fearful)

Catherine: Don't be scared. I'm your friend. What would make you feel more comfortable?

(students look at each other)

Student #3: *(shyly)* Well, could we touch you to see if you're real?

Catherine: Oh, I'm real all right! But sure, go ahead.

Students: *(begin to touch her tentatively and give different reactions)* Wow! Cool! Oooh, just like Casper the friendly ghost! Boy, no one's ever gonna believe this!

Student #4: *(feeling more comfortable)* Well, what should we call you?

Catherine: Well, my friends call me Kate.

Student #2: *(playfully but not sarcastically)* Okay, Kate! You know, my teacher was saying something about you in Religion class, but I wasn't really paying attention.

Student #1: *(to #2)* That's just like you. You never pay attention! I remember. *(to Catherine)* [Religion teacher] said you were the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy and you helped the poor in Ireland, right?

Catherine: Yes, that's right. But I was also very dedicated to the education of women in my time, especially young women like you. You know, the women in my time had many of the same challenges you have today.

Student #5: Like finding a prom date?

Students: *(laughing, call #5 names like “airhead”)*

Catherine: Well yes, they had those problems. But they also had trouble getting a good education and finding jobs. So I tried to help them. You know, it occurs to me that being a young woman in today’s society must be really hard sometimes. What are some of the challenges you girls encounter?

Student #2: *(responds with an example of a teen problem)*

Student #3: Yeah. *(responds with another problem)*

Catherine: *(empathetic)* You know, I think it must be really hard to be a teenager today.

Students: Yeah, sometimes.

Catherine: But you know what amazes me? With all the pressures you experience, you still take time to be merciful and kind to one another.

Student #5: What do you mean?

Catherine: Well, for example, the way you try to care for one another, by helping each other out with your problems. I know that you’re always willing to help each other with school work. And even during Thanksgiving and Christmas, you try to help others with the food drive and the adopt-a-family program. *(smiling at #5)* And I’m sure you also help each other find prom dates!

Students: *(smiling)* Yeah!

(Pause)

Catherine: Have you ever had a dream, a wish, something that you hoped for?

Students: Yeah, sure!

Catherine: Well, you girls are my dream come true!

Student #4: *(surprised)* We are!?

Catherine: Yes! My dream was that people would experience God’s love and mercy through one another — you know, from person to person. And that’s what you do. When

you listen to a friend, when you help a classmate, when you're kind to a new freshman, you are the hand of God in the world.

You may not realize it, but you are an important part of something that has been alive for generations. You are among hundreds of thousands of young people who have graduated from Mercy High Schools all over the world. You are an essential part of the spirit of Mercy.

Student #1: Wow!

Catherine: You are the reason this school exists! The purpose of this school is to help you gain all the skills you need to be successful in the world. But I also hope you can be a part of a wonderful tradition — and actually a way of life — by trying to be a merciful person in the world. And if you weren't around, there would be something missing.

Students: Wow!

(Pause)

Catherine: Now, I just have one more request before I leave. *(excited)* I have never seen a cell phone before! Can you show me how it works?

Students: Sure!

(Students coach Catherine on how to use a cell phone.)

Student #2: Hey Kate, do you think you could come to Mercy Day tomorrow?

Catherine: Absolutely, I'm always here on Mercy Day!

Student #3: *(as the others exit)* Boy, [principal] is never going to believe this!!

(Everyone exits.)

The Story of Catherine McAuley

Characters

Narrator

Sign holder

Catherine McAuley

James McGauley (Catherine's father)

Mr. Callaghan

Girl in need

3 Sisters of Mercy (played by students)

Props

7 posterboards, each one sporting one of the following phrases or images:

- “Yeah!”
- “That’s us!”
- “Boo!”
- “Wow, that’s really generous!”
- “You Go, Catherine!”
- the ship USS Mercy
- a blank check, payable to Catherine McAuley

Directions

At different points in the narration, the sign holder will hold up a sign and the different groups noted in the script will respond by saying the words on the sign. It is best to practice with the audience/congregation before you begin the narration, so each group knows its part and can repeat the phrase in unison. The actors in the skit mime the actions given within the text of the story as they are read by the narrator. The actors themselves never speak.

Narration Begins

A long, long time ago there lived a woman named Catherine McAuley. And wouldn't you know it by the fine Irish name, she lived in Dublin. *(audience/congregation: Yeah!)*

The early 19th century was a difficult time in Ireland's history, because the penal code kept most people poor and there was a lot of prejudice against Catholics. *(sophomores: Boo!)* So being an Irish Catholic during this time was somewhat of a double whammy!

Although times were rough for Catherine and her family, her father, James, was a very generous man. He invited the poor of the town to his home every Sunday. *(James and Catherine walk into site lines and mime handing out food to the poor.)* When they arrived, James and little Catherine handed out food to those in need. Catherine was very proud of her father and was greatly influenced by his kindness to others.

When Catherine was still young, her father died. Then, when her mother also died, Catherine

and her brother and sister went to live with relatives. A few years later, Catherine was invited to live with the Callaghans. (*Mr. Callaghan and Catherine walk into site lines and Callaghan gives Catherine a blank check.*) A while later Mr. Callaghan died and left Catherine all his money, property and estate. (*freshmen: Wow, that's really generous!*)

(*Catherine turns to audience/congregation and mimes the following.*)

When Catherine received the money, she thought, “Oh dear, what should I do with all this money? Oh boy, maybe I can buy some new clothes or a beautiful horse and carriage!” Personally, I would have bought a BMW. Oops, sorry, wrong time period!

(*Girl in need enters into site lines, moving towards Catherine.*)

Anyway, in the midst of considering her options, Catherine was interrupted by a girl with a problem. The girl explained to Catherine that she was on the streets and in serious danger. (*Catherine and girl in need walk off.*) Immediately, Catherine took the girl and went to a service organization to get help for the young woman. But they put her off, saying that their board was not meeting for a few days. After that night Catherine never saw the young woman again.

This event upset Catherine so much that she decided to use the money she had inherited to build a refuge for women and the poor. The first House of Mercy was built in 1827, and it provided job training and education for young women. (*faculty: Yeah!*)

Soon, other women who saw the good work Catherine was doing wanted to join her. During the cholera epidemic of 1832, Catherine and her friends nursed the sick.

Although Catherine was doing a lot of good work, she came under attack by others (*seniors: Boo!*) because she was a single woman working on her own and had very radical ideas. (*juniors: You Go, Catherine!*)

(*Three Sisters of Mercy move into site lines with USS Mercy posterboard.*)

But soon many more women joined Catherine, and the Sisters of Mercy were born! (*audience/congregation: Yeah!*) A few years later, the Sisters of Mercy sailed across the ocean to the United States to help with the cholera epidemic during the California Gold Rush. When they finally arrived in the United States, the Sisters immediately began building schools, hospitals and orphanages.

In 1931 the Sisters bought a piece of land in Burlingame, California, and built a high school. (*audience/congregation: That's us!*) At the first Mercy High School celebration of Mercy Day, the choir sang this song to their students, which started a tradition we still follow today!

Directors Notes

The skit can end with the school choir singing “Hail Holy Queen” from the movie soundtrack “Sister Act.” Another option is to have a group of students create a dance to the same song. For a more subdued ending, have a group sing the song “The Circle of Mercy”.

Storytelling

(This concept was created by Angie Simonetti, Mercy High School Burlingame.)

Directions

This reflection on Catherine McAuley begins like any other; but in the midst of the presentation, the speaker is interrupted on three separate occasions by individuals who want to share their favorite story about Catherine. The purpose of doing the reflection in this manner is threefold: first, it adds a little humor and something different to a familiar story; second, it reflects the individual's personal experience of Catherine; and third, it makes the presentation more interactive.

When this piece was originally presented, a Sister of Mercy began the reflection and two Religion teachers and a Senior did the interrupting. In deciding who will interrupt the presentation, it is important to choose people who genuinely do have a personal connection with Catherine and a favorite story to tell.

Formal Dialogue

Sister of Mercy:

This morning we come together as a community to celebrate Mercy Day. We have spent the past week welcoming the Freshmen into our community, discussing Catherine McAuley in our Religion classes, and planning today's celebration. Each year during this time, we reflect on the life and mission of Catherine McAuley so we can more fully understand who she was and how her life and work influence us today.

I would like to take some time this morning to share with you some of my favorite stories about Catherine McAuley, so you may begin to have a deeper appreciation of who she was and what she was about. I believe you will begin to see Catherine as a woman of great compassion ...

First Interruption

Faculty Member #1: I thought *I* was doing the reflection?

Sister: No. Remember we discussed it last Wednesday and decided I would do it?

Faculty Member #1: Well, is it okay if I share one of my favorite stories of Catherine?

Faculty Member #1 shares her story.

Sister:

I'm glad [faculty member] shared that particular story with us. But now I'm looking at my notes, because I don't want to repeat what she has already said. (*pause*) We learn through stories of Catherine that she was a woman of strong will. She went beyond herself to help people whom others ignored. She asks us to ...

Second Interruption

Senior: Sister, I'm late because I got stuck in traffic. Where should I sit?

Sister: [student's name], can't you see I'm trying to give a reflection?

Senior: What are you talking about?

Sister: I'm trying to share some stories about Catherine McAuley.

Senior: *(excited)*

Oh, let me tell one of my favorite stories! I remember ... I'm not sure if I was a sophomore or junior, but that doesn't matter. The story I remember the best ... well, it's not really a story, but it's something she did that reminds me of how important my friends are to me.

After Catherine founded the Sisters of Mercy, she would hear of needs from all around Ireland; and to respond to those needs, she opened up convents all over the country. She would choose her best Sisters, and many times her best friends, to begin these new convents and new works of charity. It kind of reminds me of us, the seniors ... how we'll soon be scattering all over.

But, the best part was ... not only did she make the hard choices to send her best friends to start the new works, but she kept in close contact with them by writing letters. I can't believe how many letters she wrote ...

(Sister interrupts)

Sister:

That's very nice, [student]. Thank you for sharing that story. Maybe you can go find a seat now. So there we have yet another story of Catherine that shows her commitment to her work. Now let me see if I can find my place ...

Third Interruption

Faculty Member #2: Sister, you wouldn't mind one more interruption, would you?

Sister: Oh what the heck, go ahead!

Faculty Member #2 shares her story.

Sister:

Well, as I look at my notes, it seems that all the basics have been covered! Certainly makes *my* job a little easier! Okay then. Well, let's get on with our celebration!

The Good Samaritan

Characters

Narrator
Mercy freshman
3 sinister Mercy students
2 additional Mercy freshmen
3 choir members
2 Religion teachers
2 Mercy seniors
“Statue of Mary”

Props

set of car keys
copy of “The Prayer of St. Francis”

Directions

Actors mime the actions given within the text of the story as they are read by the narrator. The only words spoken in this piece are those read by the narrator.

Narration

There was once a Mercy freshman who, while traveling from homeroom down to Russell Hall, fell upon a group of sinister Mercy students. Upon meeting up with the freshman, the sinister Mercy students circled the young girl, stopped and glared at her. Then they laughed, made fun of the length of her skirt, stole her schedule, and finally ran off yelling, “Freshmen are geeks, freshmen are geeks!”

The Mercy freshman, feeling very distraught and alone, went and stood under the statue of Mary and began to cry.

Not long afterwards, a couple of other freshmen happened by and noticed the girl sitting alone and crying. After listening to her story, the group of freshmen shrugged because they didn’t know what to do. The concerned freshmen, wondering who could help the girl with her problems, looked to the left and then looked to the right, but there was not a school counselor in sight. Finally they threw up their hands in frustration and scurried off to class.

A little while later, a couple of members of the choir stopped on their way to choir practice. They asked the lonely freshman if she could sing and checked her vocal chords to see if they were healthy. When they had finished, they skipped off, singing “You’ve Got a Friend.”

About four minutes into the next period, two Religion teachers hurried by on their way to a meeting. The freshman related to the teachers all that had happened to her. Listening carefully, the Religion teachers thought it would be helpful to give her a copy of “The Prayer of St. Francis.” Upon leaving the freshman, the teachers genuflected to the statue of Mary and went on their way. As they left, they reminded the freshman that she was out of uniform and said that if she didn’t hurry she would be late for her next class.

Finally, some seniors happened by on their way back from a meeting with the dean. They had their car keys in hand and were creeping about, trying to make it to the parking lot in order to sneak off campus. When they noticed the freshman, they looked into her eyes with deep caring and concern and asked her why she looked so sad. As they listened, they gasped at what had happened. They gave her a hug and invited her to go to [local fast-food joint] with them for lunch. As they walked toward the car, the freshman smiled with glee, and the Seniors gave her expert advice on how to wear the Mercy uniform and still be cool.

Penelope Goes to Her Senior Prom

Characters

narrator
sign holder
Penelope
Harold
Sister Mary
Sally
Harriet
Missy Not-So-Nice

Props

10 posterboards, each one sporting one of the following phrases:

“That’s us!”
“That’s for sure!”
“Oops!”
“Oh, that’s so sad!”
“Shame on you, Sister Mary!”
“Ssssss!”
“What a good friend ... not!”
“Wow, that’s really nice!”
“Wow, what a great person!”
“Ah, that’s so cute!”

Directions

At different points in the narration, the sign holder will hold up a sign and the different groups noted in the script will respond by saying the phrase on the sign. It is best to practice with the audience before you begin the narration, so that the sign holder gets practice switching signs quickly and each group knows its part and can say the phrases in unison.

The characters in the skit mime the actions given within the text of the story as they are read by the narrator. The only words spoken in this skit are those read by the narrator.

Formal Narration Begins

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Penelope. Penelope was a senior at Mercy High School. She enjoyed attending Mercy very much and she especially loved all her wonderful teachers. (*Faculty: “That’s us!”*)

We begin the story of Penelope at a particularly exciting time in her life, as she was preparing for her senior prom. As we all know, much preparation takes place before the prom. (*Seniors: “That’s for sure!”*) There are dresses to buy, boutonnieres to order, parties to plan, and hairdos to tend.

The night of the prom, Penelope was very excited and waited impatiently for her Knight in Shining Armor. When he arrived, he was dashing and handsome in his rented tuxedo and wore a great big smile.

After saying their hellos and exchanging flowers, Penelope and Harold got in the car and took off for the prom. As they were driving to the prom, Harold looked at Penelope with deep love and affection. As he gazed at Penelope, he was so caught up in the rapture of love that he inadvertently ran through a stop sign, up over a curb, on to a lawn, and landed on top of a bush. *(All: "Oops!")*

When Penelope caught her breath after this hair-raising experience, she looked with concern to find that Harold had broken his arm during the accident. As Penelope sat in her beautiful prom dress, surveying Harold's injuries, she wondered, "Who will help us? Will my beloved Harold ever be able to put his arms around me again?" *(Freshmen: "Oh, that's so sad!")*

Penelope pulled out her cellphone and realized it was cracked and broken and Harold forgot his at home. As she sat and pondered their dilemma, she was relieved to see Sr. Mary walking down the street. "Certainly," Penelope thought, "Sr. Mary will help us. She is a Sister of Mercy." Penelope explained the situation to Sr. Mary and asked her if she could help. At that, Sr. Mary said she wished she could help, but she was on her way to prayers at the convent, and if she helped she would surely be late. *(Sophomores: "Shame on you, Sr. Mary!")* But Sr. Mary did invite Penelope to join the Service Club when she returned to school on Monday.

A few minutes later Penelope recognized another familiar face walking by. It was Sally, one of the Senior Class Officers. "Surely Sally will help us," Penelope thought. "She's always been such a wonderful Mercy girl." But Sally kept walking, pretending not to hear Penelope's cries for help. You see, Sally had been stood up by her own prom date and thought, "If I can't go to the prom, then neither should Penelope!" *(All: "Ssssss!")*

Penelope's heart broke in two when she realized that no one would help them. But, while in despair, she noticed someone else. "Oh my God," said Penelope "It's my best friend, Harriet! For sure Harriet will help us."

Harriet and her boyfriend stopped and asked what had happened. After listening to the story, Harriet said, "Penelope, you know that we are life-long friends, and I love you very much. But it's really late, and if we stop to help you, we won't get to the prom before the doors close and I'll miss my senior prom." She then said, "Later, girlfriend!" and drove off. *(Juniors: "What a good friend ... not!")*

So Penelope sat back in her seat feeling very depressed. A few minutes later, another car pulled up whose driver got out and asked if she could help. When the driver came closer, Penelope recognized the girl as Missy Not-So-Nice from Mercy's rival school, [school name]. After Penelope recognized Missy Not-So-Nice, she got worried, wondering what Missy might do. Would she laugh at them because they had run their car into a bush? Would she throw things at them while they were stuck in one place? Would she take pictures and post them on instagram?

Surprisingly, though, Missy Not-So-Nice called AAA and Penelope's mom, waited for the tow-truck to arrive, and drove Penelope and Harold to the hospital. (*All: "Wow, that's really nice!"*)

While in the waiting room at the hospital, Penelope learned that Missy Not-So-Nice stopped to help on the way to her own senior prom. When Penelope heard this, she realized that Missy had given up the chance to attend her last prom in order to help *her*, a Mercy girl! Realizing this, Penelope had to ask Missy, "Why? Why did you give up your own senior prom to help a Mercy girl in distress?" And Missy answered, "I stopped because you needed help." (*All: "Wow, what a great person!"*)

From that day forward, Penelope and Missy became life-long friends, and years later Penelope named one of her daughters after Missy. (*All: "Ah, that's so cute!"*)

The End

United in Mercy

Mercy Day Liturgy

Theme

Celebrating Mercy community, heritage and vision

Materials

dancers for option one

— or —

iMovie for option two (LCD projector and Laptop)

(for both options see instructions under “Opening” below)

storytellers *(see directions in “Storytelling” in “Mercy Day Skits” section)*

flowers, one per Sister of Mercy present

(see instructions under “Presentation to Sisters of Mercy” below)

five or six faculty members willing to pray individually with participants

(see instructions under “Prayer of Healing” below)

Gathering Reflection

“We Gather and Remember”

Deeply rooted in a rich heritage,
Sustained by a 193 tradition,
Grounded by a community of friends,
Diverse in culture,
United in faith,
We gather around this table,
We remember a woman named Catherine,
We celebrate the God of Mercy.

Opening

Option One: “Reel Around the Sun” by Bill Whelan (Dance)

(available on iTunes)

See Dance section of this book for choreographic instructions for “Reel Around the Sun.”

Option Two: iMovie

Invite students to put together an iMovie that includes images of current students, school history and Mercy heritage. The iMovie can be presented with the instrumental piece “Cry of the Celts” by Ronan Hardiman.

Opening Prayer

Add your own opening prayer here.

First Reading

“Mercy at Seventeen”

This reading appears in the “Mercy Poetry” section of this book.

Response

“Suscipe of Catherine McAuley” by Elaine Deasy

(available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/)

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-13

Homily

Ask the presider to reflect on Catherine McAuley’s life and the spirit of Mercy in light of the Beatitudes.

— or —

Reflection

“Storytelling”

“Storytelling” appears in the “Mercy Day Skits” section of this book.

Prayers of the Faithful

Ask the presider to invite the congregation to offer their own spontaneous prayers of petition.

Communion Song “Circle of Mercy” by Jeannette Goglia RSM

(available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/)

Prayer of Healing

After participants receive Communion, invite them (if they wish) to go to one of the faculty members positioned at various locations in the worship space. Each participant requests from the faculty member a “Prayer for Healing” for some specific intention. The faculty member then places her hands over the participant’s head and prays for that person individually.

Presentation to the Sisters of Mercy

Invite the Sisters of Mercy forward and present them with flowers as a symbol of gratefulness for their service to the school community.

Closing Song

“Alma Mater”

The Bread of Our Lives

Thanksgiving Prayer Service

Theme

This prayer service explores bread as a central part of our lives and how it draws us into relationship with others. It explores some of the many unique types of breads and how breads can be symbolic of our relationships.

Materials

various types of breads: rye, wheat, Irish soda, banana nut, French, pita, corn, focaccia, bagels, sweet breads, tortillas, etc.

Environment

Display the various breads in the center of the worship space.

Gathering Reflection

Bread has always been an essential element of our daily meals. One can imagine that at the first Thanksgiving Feast with the Pilgrims and Native Americans bread was an essential part of the festive dinner. Bread continues to be a very central part of our meals today. Bread is basic to life. It nourishes and feeds us. It is an essential element to any complete meal. Bread is celebrative; it draws us together. We split a sandwich, we go out for a burrito (tortilla is considered a bread), we bring soda bread to a holiday gathering. The sharing of bread is an essential ingredient of our relationships.

Bread is often seen as a staple in our meals, but we have become very sophisticated in our bread-making. If you think about it, we make bread in many different ways. We have the basic white “Wonder Bread,” but we also have wheat, rye, corn, gingerbread, soda bread, nut bread, tortillas, sourdough, focaccia, etc. We have a large variety of different types of breads.

Bread brings us together; in fact, it *draws* us together. Bread is such an important part of our everyday lives that sometimes bread can almost seem to have a life of its own; or perhaps people who come together to share bread can almost seem to take on characteristics similar to the type of bread they share!

In fact, the very process of bread-making can be compared to how we go about developing relationships. We look for very specific ingredients, we bring them together, we mix them, give them time to interact, let them set — and finally we have bread!

Reading

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul gave us a recipe for love and friendship:

For love to be enduring and long-lasting —

Pour 2 cups of kindness into a large mixing bowl. Add one teaspoon of patience and 2-1/2 teaspoons of humor. Over time, add 1/3 of a cup of trust, topped off by one teaspoon of forbearance. Let set awhile. Then add 3 heaping tablespoons of endurance and equal measures of Faith, Hope and Love. (Be careful not to allow jealousy or snobbishness into the mix, as either will surely spoil the recipe.) When all the ingredients have been added, mix slowly and with much care, stirring gently, until all the ingredients have joined together. Then take the ingredients out of the bowl, roll it out, and begin to knead it.

Bread Descriptions

Short bread

When we think of shortbread, we think of children — innocent, carefree and honest. These ingredients are part of some of our relationships — friendships in which we don't need to watch our words; a place where we can truly be who we are, where we can really be honest.

Rice Cakes

In ancient times rice was, in many places, very rare and treasured. What friendships do you have that you treasure, that are somehow rare and hard to come by?

Dutch Crunch Bread

The older it gets, the crunchier it is. Some of our friendships are crunchy relationships. We aren't afraid of things getting a little loud or rough. We are honest with each other, we challenge each other, and the relationship just seems to get more satisfying with time.

Tortillas

Tortillas are the staple bread of Latin America. In these sometimes confusing times in which we live, there is nothing more cherished than a stable friend whom we can always count on to be there. This is the friend who is loyal and faithful, ever-present in good times and bad.

Irish Soda Bread

This bread reminds us of the holidays. What about those friends who remind us of parties and good times together? These are the friendships that remind us that all work and no play make for a very boring existence!

Pita Bread

Pita bread is fun to make sandwiches with because you hide things in the middle. Pita bread can be a symbol of our close friends, those with whom we share our inner selves, those who listen to our secrets, those who really know what is special to us.

Gingerbread

What makes gingerbread so good is the spice ginger. Think about friends who add spice to your life, those who add a different flavor, those who make life taste just a little different.

Banana Nut Bread

This bread is fun because it has a lot of nuts. How about those friendships that are a little nutty and sometimes drive you bananas? These are the friendships that keep us on our toes and offer us a little craziness and a lot of fun!

Reflection Questions

Ask participants to reflect for a few moments on the following questions:

- *Which type of bread most closely resembles one of your relationships?*
- *Which type of bread most closely resembles your relationship with God right now?*

Share in Partners

Participants share the fruits of their reflections with a partner.

Group Share

Invite someone to share their thoughts or the fruits of their interaction with their partner.

Gospel Reading

John 6:32-36

Song

“Bread of Heaven” by Jesse Manibusan and Sarah Hart (*available on iTunes*)

Reflection

When thinking about what symbol he wanted to leave behind, Jesus chose bread, because it is symbolic of the fact that He is always with us. God’s presence with us is as common as bread — always there, nourishing us and feeding our spirits.

During the time immediately following the death of Jesus, the early Christians would meet in homes to celebrate their love for Him. They called these events *Agape Feasts*, which literally means love feasts — when friends gather to share faith. When they came together, they told stories recalling Jesus, sang songs, and shared bread and wine.

Blessing of the Bread

“We have shared bread ... many times in our lives, in many places, and for many reasons. The bread that we now break ... [is] a sharing in the life of Christ. May our acceptance of it today be a sign of our faith

- in the ongoing goodness of a God who journeys with us,
- in the power of love to remove any barrier within and among us,
- in the mystery of the call given to each one here to make bread and life and beauty available to everyone.

We pray then, good and gracious God, that we might recognize You in this breaking of bread today. It is the bread of heaven, the bread of the poor, the bread of our lives. May we recognize You every time we join someone on a journey, every time we share a meal, every time we take bread into our hands. And may this recognition call forth joy in us, that we might never lose sight of Your goodness.”

Kozak, Pat, and Janet Schaffran. *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities*. New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994.

Sharing of the Bread

Friendship Blessing in Partners

Invite everyone present to pick a partner with whom to share this prayer.

Place a hand over your partner’s head and pray for God’s blessing.

God of Mercy, as a community of friends we pray today for Your blessing. We pray that the words we utter in friendship will be statements of honesty, that our sharing will be in truth. We pray that in friendship we might offer words of encouragement, and that our words may always reflect a spirit of dignity and respect. We pray that we might not be shy or inhibited in telling each other of our love. We pray that we have the courage to speak Your message of Mercy and compassion. God of creation, bless our speech, the every day chatter of our friendships, the song of your peace.

Place a hand near your partner’s shoulder.

God of love, as a community of friends we pray for Your blessing. We pray that our experience of friendship will open our hearts and make us more loving and compassionate. We pray that our hearts will be big enough to hold the concerns and fears of our friends, and that our hearts will be courageous enough to hold in love those who have left us. Help us open our hearts to those who are friendless in our society — the outcast, the poor, the homeless, those who are sick and dying. Give us hearts of flesh, tender enough to know Your mercy. Let the friendship we share draw us beyond ourselves, to offer love to the friends we don’t yet know. God of love, bless our hearts, that we may be gentle people of compassion and love.

Please hold out both hands in front of you.

Tender God, as a community of friends, we pray for Your blessing. We pray that the work of our hands will forever create friendship among Your people. Help us reach out to each other in times of suffering and pain; enable us to reach out to each other in love and affection. Help us give our time and talents to those who are in need of a helping hand. We pray that our hands will be instruments of creation, protecting the world from those with destructive hands. In love, tender God, bless our hands, that through You we will be workers in the vineyard for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Please stand in a large circle.

Holy Spirit, as we face one another we experience Your presence among us. We are gifted in this community with the spirit of friendship and its action in our lives. Enable us to bring that spirit of friendship to others. Help us live in the spirit of Your goodness and love.

May God's peace be reflected in our words.

May God's friendship find a home in our hearts.

May God's love be the work of our hands.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thanksgiving Prayer Service

(Religion Class)

Materials

stationary and envelope for each participant

Opening Prayer

“Prayer of Thanksgiving” by Vienna Cobb Anderson

God of all blessings, source of all life, giver of all grace:

We thank you for the gift of life: for the breath
that sustains life, for the food of this earth
that nurtures life, for the love of family and friends
without which there would be no life.

We thank you for the mystery of creation: for the beauty
that the eye can see, for the joy that the ear may hear,
for the unknown that we cannot behold filling the universe with wonder,
for the expanse of space that draws us beyond the definitions of our selves.

We thank you for setting us in communities: for families
who nurture our becoming, for friends who love us by choice,
for companions at work, who share our burdens and daily tasks,
for strangers who welcome us into their midst,
for people from other lands who call us to grow in understanding,
for children who lighten our moments with delight,
for the unborn, who offer us hope for the future.

We thank you for this day:
for life and one more day to love, for opportunity
and one more day to work for justice and peace,
for neighbors and one more person to love
and by whom be loved, for your grace
and one more experience of your presence, for your promise:
to be with us, to be our God, and to give salvation.

For these, and all blessings, we give you thanks, eternal, loving God,
through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Gratitude Video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ&sns=em

The Light Meditation

Make yourself comfortable... Close your eyes, and begin to let yourself relax... Simply become aware of the rhythm of your breathing, your breath moving in and moving out...

Now imagine that the area around you is being filled with a gentle light... This light conveys to you a sense of love and healing... Imagine it begins to swirl around you, starting with your feet and moving upward around your entire body... As it swirls around you it begins to relax each part of you...

Breathe in this loving and healing energy... Feel it enter you... Exhale any anxiety or any fatigue... As you breathe in this gentle light know that you are being sustained by a presence this is loving and healing, even when you are not aware of it...*

Now take some time to reflect on this question...
At this moment who are you most grateful for? (*repeat question again*)

(*Pause for about three minutes*)

When you are ready, taking all the time that you need, begin to bring your awareness back to your present surroundings.

**Finding Healing From Within, Level II*, Kathleen Denison, 1991

Letter Writing

During the meditation you were asked who you are most grateful for? You are now going to be given a period of time to write a letter of thanks to that person. You will also be given an envelope so you can send or give it to the person over Thanksgiving break.

Closing Prayer by Thomas Merton from *Thoughts in Solitude*, 33

To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything that has been given. Every breath we draw is a gift of God's love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces.

Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and is in praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.

What Child is This?

Advent/Christmas Liturgy

Theme

Experiencing motherhood from a mother's perspective

Background

This prayer service was created in an attempt to help students come to a deeper understanding of Mary's experience of motherhood, pregnancy, and the birth and early years of Jesus.

To accomplish this objective, three students and one faculty member, all of whom we knew enjoyed good relationships with their mothers, were chosen. The mothers of these individuals were contacted, first by phone and then by a follow-up email. During the initial phone conversations, the mothers were informed that we were going to create a script and Google slide presentation illustrating a mother's relationship with her child. To help us achieve this objective, each mother was asked to fill out a simple questionnaire about the pregnancy and birth of her child.

The mothers were then asked to send back infant and toddler digital photographs along with the completed questionnaires. The conversations with the mothers remained confidential; this presentation was meant to be a surprise for the individuals chosen.

Once received, the photographs were made into a Google slide presentation and a script was created from the questionnaires.

During the prayer service, the individuals chosen were invited up to help illustrate more fully the experience of a mother. The individuals had no idea what was going to happen. The presentation began by focusing attention on the first student; the LCD projector was turned on and the mother's description of her pregnancy and the birth and toddler years of her child were read. Even though only three or four Google slides per individual were shown, they were very engaging and brought the narration to life.

After the entire presentation was completed, the mothers, who were hiding in the back, came forward and presented their daughters with flowers. Needless to say, there was not a dry eye in the house as the experience of motherhood came to life in this presentation! (For samples of the letter, questionnaire and script see the end of this prayer service.)

Materials

3-4 Google slides per chosen participant

Laptop and LCD projector

script developed from questionnaire responses

Gathering Reflection

"Christmas is for Children"

Christmas is for children ...
Toys, Santa and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

Christmas is more than *for* children,
Christmas *is* children.
It is *about* children.
It is the story of one Child and one mother.

Christmas is about the joy that one mother felt
At the birth of her Child.

Christmas is about the joy that every mother
Experiences at the birth of her child.

It is about how, with the birth of every child, we experience
A new sense of hope for our world.

Christmas is a yearly reminder that
With the birth of every new infant
Hope and innocence are restored.

This is the simple message of Christmas.

As Christians we are called to be
Women of hope,
Women of renewed expectation,
Women rebirthing joy.

Optional Reading from Macrina Wiederkehr, *Seasons of Your Heart*

I don't remember growing up.
It must have happened while I wasn't looking
but it is obvious from my heart
that it has happened ...

... I am looking to children
and searching in them
for a simplicity and ordinariness
that makes being an adult
easier to accept
and miracles easier to see.

Opening Song

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” by John M. Neale (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 52:7-10

Response

“Gentle Woman” by Carey Landry (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Reflection

A Mother’s Reflection (*see sample materials below*)

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:1-14

Prayers of the Faithful

Mary, blessed among women, you said yes to the invitation to bring hope into our world. You mothered our Redeemer. You witnessed the death of your Son and rejoiced in His resurrection. Give us the strength to love as you did, faithfully and selflessly.

Our Lady of Mercy, intercede for us.

Mother of Mercy, you watch over the least of His brethren, the poor, the outcast, the abandoned dying, the homeless youth. Instill in us hearts of peace and hands of justice to bring the good news of Christ Jesus.

Our Lady of Mercy, intercede for us.

Our Lady of Peace, we pray for an end to violence in our world. For countries torn by war, for cities ravaged by racism and hatred, for families struggling with unrest, make us instruments of peace and advocates for justice.

Our Lady of Mercy, intercede for us.

Mary our sister and mother, we pray during this holy season for all mothers, that they might be a refuge of love and peace for their children. We pray especially for pregnant women who are alone, frightened and poor, that they will find courage to address the challenges of motherhood.

Our Lady of Mercy, intercede for us.

Mary, Mother of Jesus, bring peace and grace to our families. Help us make our homes places of refuge and rebirth. Help us be patient and understanding and seek the best in one another. In gratitude we ask you to bless our mothers who have given us the gift of life. We give thanks for all they’ve done, both what is known to us and what is unknown. For all they have done, we give thanks. Our Lady of Mercy, intercede for us.

Hail Mary

Closing Song

“Silent Night” by Joseph Mohr (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Sample Email to Mothers

Dear _____,

During our student body Advent prayer service this year, we will be focusing on the experiences of mothers in relationship to their children during infancy and the toddler years. To personalize this experience for our students, we have chosen you and your daughter.

To help me organize the project and come to a better understanding of your experiences with your daughter as an infant and toddler, I have attached a list of questions for which I would appreciate your answers. Please skip any question you don’t feel comfortable answering. If there is anything else you would like to share, please feel free to do so.

During the prayer service, we will invite your daughter forward and read a summary of your comments, enhancing it with slides of her as an infant and toddler. In order to do this, I am also asking you to send back, along with the completed questionnaire:

- two digital photos of your daughter as a baby
- two digital photos of her between the ages of two and five years

Please email me the photos and completed questionnaire by (*date*). Please meet me in the Chapel at (*time*) so we can go over any last minute directions before the liturgy begins. Remember, this presentation is a surprise. Please do not say anything about it to your daughter. Thank you.

Sample Questionnaire for Mothers

1. How did you feel when you found out you were pregnant with your daughter?
2. Was your pregnancy easy or difficult? Please explain.
3. Was the birth of your daughter easy or difficult? Please explain.
4. Were there any unusual circumstances surrounding the birth? (e.g., “We got caught in a traffic jam and almost didn’t make it to the hospital.”)
5. Why did you choose the name that you chose?
6. What was your daughter like as an infant (quiet, a crier, etc.)?
7. When your daughter was restless as an infant, what would calm her down?
8. What were your daughter’s first words?
9. Did you have a nickname for your daughter?
10. What was your daughter like as a toddler?
11. What kind of mischief did your daughter get into as a toddler?

12. Were you ever surprised by your daughter's questions after she learned to talk?
13. What was your daughter's favorite toy?
14. How did your daughter handle her early visits to see Santa Claus?
15. Would you like to share any special memories about your daughter and those first Christmas experiences?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Example of Responses

(These are the responses provided by a mother in an actual questionnaire.)

Was your pregnancy easy or difficult?

My pregnancy was great! I had very little morning sickness. I enjoyed the changes in my body. My hair became very thick and my skin was rosy. I really felt like I glowed! I'm a nurse, and my patients fussed over me, knitting baby blankets and bringing me treats. I had four baby showers!

What was your daughter like as an infant?

Boy, after the great pregnancy and easy labor, we sure weren't prepared for what was in store for us. The family still refers to Gina as the "baby from hell." She cried endlessly and angrily. This inspired the elders of the family to impose such old wives tales as changing the lightbulbs to 25 watt bulbs and informing me that the child must be starving from trying to breast-feed from my very flat chest.

When your daughter was restless as an infant, what would calm her down?

We put hot water bottles in her bassinet, put her infant seat on the clothes dryer, turned on the vacuum cleaner, sang, walked. Some things would work for a short time, but then the crying started all over again.

Did you have any nicknames for your daughter?

"Boo Boo Kitty"!

What kinds of mischief did your daughter get into as a toddler?

Most of our friends had boys, so her birthday parties had predominantly boy guests. She learned to defend herself early. One boy was especially rowdy standing on a chair. She stood up and punched him right onto the floor and said, "That takes care of you, David!"

Is there anything else you would like to share?

There is no greater challenge in life than being a parent, no greater joy than the birth of your first child. It bonds a husband and wife together like nothing else can. No parent is given a crystal ball to see the future for her baby. Although Gina's infancy was a challenge, I certainly have been rewarded with a very special teenager. I couldn't ask for a more loving, happy daughter. Gina, you are a joy!

Angels We Have Heard on High

Advent/Christmas Liturgy

Theme

This liturgy focuses on the Visitation of Mary by the Angel Gabriel. It explores how Mary experienced the Visitation and how Gabriel was chosen from all the other angels to be the messenger.

Materials

(See “Angel Interview” below.)

Opening Song

“Angels We Have Heard on High” by James Chadwick (*Gather Comprehensive*)

First Reading

Micah 5:1-4

Response

“Do You Hear What I Hear?” by Noel Regney (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Second Reading

1 Samuel 2:1-8

Gospel

Luke 1:26-39

The Visitation of Mary by the Angel Gabriel

To help “break open the word” of this scripture passage, the “living statues” technique can be used. As you will notice in the readings below, certain phrases have been underlined. The key phrases underlined highlight Mary’s feelings during her encounter with the Angel Gabriel. To illustrate Mary’s experience more fully, ask students to create silent still-frame physical postures that represent the words underlined. During this process each student creates her own unique silent still-frame posture in order to show the full range and complexity of Mary’s emotions.

During the liturgy the actors stand motionless in the center of the worship space where they can be seen by the entire congregation. As the gospel reading is presented, the reader reads each underlined portion twice in order to cue the actors to move into their physical postures. The reader then pauses to give the congregation time to view each of the actor’s silent still-frames. When sufficient time has elapsed for viewing, the reader continues; but the actors hold their poses until the next key phrase is read.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the Angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a girl promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The girl's name was Mary.

The Angel came to her and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"

Mary was deeply troubled by the Angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. The Angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a Son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God."

Mary was confused and said to the Angel, "I am a virgin. How then can this be?"

The Angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. For this reason the holy Child will be called the Son of God.

"Remember your cousin Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children; but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it happen to me as you have said." And the Angel left her.

Homily

Reflections on Mary's experience of the Visitation, her willingness to say yes, or her unwavering faith would all be appropriate here.

Prayers of the Faithful

God of all creation, You sent an angel to bring the message of hope to a young Hebrew woman. Help us become people of hope during this Advent season. Renew in us a sense of mystery; awaken in us the hope of salvation.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Mary, our Blessed Mother, said yes to the invitation to give birth to our Redeemer. Lord God, help us be like Mary, whose faith was unwavering, commitment steadfast, and courage undaunted.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Today we pray for all women, especially those who are poor, frightened and alone, that they might find peace this holiday season. May we be messengers of hope as we reach out to those in need.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all people of faith this Advent season. We pray for greater unity among churches, a deepening of compassion among the faithful, and an expansion of works of service to the poor.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

God of Mercy, we pray for peace. We pray for all the places in our world torn by violence and hatred. Make us instruments of peace in our homes, schools, communities and world.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Communion Song

“Hail Mary, Gentle Woman” by Carey Landry (*Gather Hymnal*)

Communion Meditation

The Angel Interview

This skit explores the search for the angel who will be sent to Mary to let her know that she will give birth to Jesus. It is set up in an interview format for the humor element and also to illustrate what an important job it was. The skit ends with the student who plays the Angel Gabriel singing acappella “I Am Your Angel” by Celine Dion (sheet music available at musicnotes.com). This student should have a strong, clear voice for the beauty and message of this song to be fully appreciated.

Characters

The Interviewer: “Let’s get down to business” attitude

Grace: Athletic and rambunctious; captain of Heaven’s spirit team; wings have sports emblems on them

Gabriel: Scattered and disorganized; member of the heavenly choir; wings need help

Angelica: Confident and studious; member of Heaven’s debate team and honor society; wings in impeccable order

Props

set of wings that are too small and in need of repair for Gabriel

set of beautiful wings for Angelica

set of wings with sports emblems for Grace

(Wings can be made with posterboard and string.)

The skit begins with Angelica and Grace walking into the site lines of the worship space. The interviewer takes her/his place at the microphone.

Formal Dialogue Begins

Interviewer: We are here this morning to begin the interviewing process for the position of Angel Companion. I will begin by reading the job announcement:

“The Congress of Elders of the Heavenly Host seeks an angel to accompany pregnant teen. Responsibilities include long flight to Nazareth, visit to virgin, birth announcement, and accompanying teen through the birth and life of Son, Jesus the Son of God. This is a full-time position, and only serious applicants need apply. The following are mandatory requirements for this position:

“Angel must be persuasive and articulate, with the ability to reach teens. Applicants must have experience in vocal performance, including singing with the Heavenly Host Choir. Angel should be a good navigator, as the journey to Nazareth is long and arduous. Finally, serious applicants should own their own angels wings, which should be in impeccable order.

“Send resume and cover letter to:
Sanctus Angelicum, The Kingdom of Heaven”

Okay, now since we have heard what the job description is ...

(Gabriel comes running in from the back of the worship space.)

You're late!

Gabriel: Yes, I'm very sorry. I got stuck at choir practice.

Interviewer: *(annoyed)* Okay then, let's begin with an inspection of the wings. Everyone please turn around so I can see your wings. Angelica, your wings look wonderful!

Angelica: Yes, I tend to them every night before I go to bed.

Interviewer: Grace, what are all those emblems on your wings?

Grace: Those are my favorite sports teams.

Interviewer: Those wings are out of uniform! Immediately after this interview, I want you to go see the Dean of Angels for a uniform infraction!
(confused) Gabriel, what's wrong with your wings?

Gabriel: What do you mean?

Interviewer: I don't know. They look a little strange.

Gabriel: Well, I got them on sale at Walmart. I got a really good deal!

Interviewer: Well, they need to be replaced! Okay, let's move on. Angelica, what experience do you bring to this position?

Angelica: Well, I was a soprano in the Heavenly Choir for five years. I'm on the Eternity Debate Team and have won awards in persuasive speaking. I also fly six miles every morning to keep in shape.

Interviewer: Sounds great! Grace, what experience do you bring to this position?

Grace: Well, I'm on the Varsity Basketball and Volleyball teams. I am also head of the Spirit Club. I am very enthusiastic, and I'm sure I could persuade Mary to say yes to God's request.

Interviewer: Okay. Gabriel, what experience do you bring?

Gabriel: Well, I am currently a member of the Heavenly Choir.

Interviewer: And ...

Gabriel: Well, I really like teenagers!

Interviewer: Let's move on. Angelica, if you were chosen to do this visitation, what would you say to Mary?

Angelica: I would say, "Mary, just think, if you say yes to God, you will become the Queen of Heaven! People will look up to you, and your name will go down in history as the greatest woman who ever lived!"

Interviewer: Grace, what would you say?

Grace: I would say, "Come on, Mary, you can do it! You go girl! Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate? Mary! Mary! Mary! ...

Interviewer: *(interrupts Grace)* Okay, okay! Gabriel, what would you say?

Gabriel: Well, I would probably sing to her.

Interviewer: You would?

Gabriel: Yes. I even have a particular song in mind. Can I sing it right now?

Interviewer: Sure.

Gabriel: *(sings "I Am Your Angel" — (sheet music available at musicnotes.com)*

Interviewer: I think we've found our Angel!

The End

Final Blessing

Recessional

"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" by Charles Wesley (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Prayers for a New Year

The Work's of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations, Howard Thurman's, 1985

Blessing for a New Year

Remember us, O God;
from age to age be our comforter.
You have given us the wonder of time,
blessings in days and nights, seasons and years.

Bless your children at the turning of the year
and fill the months ahead with the bright hope
that is ours in the coming of Christ.

You are our God, living and reigning forever and ever.
Amen.

Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers, Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007

Coming Home

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Theme: Lent as homecoming.

Opening Song: “Hosea”, by Gregory Norbert (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Reading: *Coming Home* by Michael Morpurgo

(Coming Home is a children’s book. You can borrow a copy from your local library.

Consider making a Google slide presentation of the book. The slides can be projected while someone reads the story.)

Psalm 5: “Coming Home” by Silvia Purdie

Are you listening, Lord?
Can you hear my stifled sobs?
I am lost, searching in the dark.
Call me towards you.
Open my ear to hear your voice.

From the moment I wake
I cling to you,
before my troubles can get a grip on me.

I’m moving in with you, almighty God,
before evil can take me hostage.
There is no room in your house
for anything false or cruel.

You throw away lies,
you reject violence.
I want only to come closer to you.
I leave at the door
everything that pulls me away from you -
all my failings and fallings,
my deceptions and rebellion.
I want only to come closer to you.

Lead me into your innermost room.
Draw me in the intimacy of awe
until I know you more
and all that I am is held in you.
Then will I sing for joy!

And I will know that I am not alone;
I am in the company of friends
in your house of love and praise,
covered with your favour,
shielded by your blessing.

Prepare the way O Lord
I am coming home.

Gospel: Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32

Reflections:

In its essence, Lent is a homecoming. It is a moving inward, an introspection, a reflection. It is a finding of oneself. It is a seeking and a finding, the God within. The One who waits, not in judgement but in peace. Not as one who evaluates, but one who welcomes. We need not ask Am I enough? Because God's answer is , "You are the absolute joy of my life." Our God is a God of refuge, a God of homecoming.

As the song says, "Come back to me, with all your heart, don't let fear keep us apart, Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life."

Lent is a season that provides 40 days for us, to look and seek in a different direction. A return home to ourselves - and a return home to God. It is a good long look in the mirror, seeing who we really are, prioritizing our priorities, recognizing our brokenness and need, and evaluating our behavior.

When one stands in the light of the love of God, one does not change due to God's judgement, one changes because the desire for God's love and goodness far outweighs the emptiness of sin.

Take these Lenten days as an opportunity to come home to yourself and the one who waits for you - our God of Mercy

Distribution of Ashes:

Song: “Ashes” by Tom Conry (*available at www.ocp.org*)

Prayers of Petition:

During this Lenten Season may we come home to ourselves. May we come to know the love and peace of our God who dwells within us.

We pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear our Prayer

Lord Jesus we pray for our Mercy community. For all those who are suffering due to grief or illness. May your Mercy bring comfort and peace.

We pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear our Prayer

Let us pray for world peace. That those who lead our country may do what is best for all the peoples of the world, especially the poor and needy.

We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the poor and suffering in our world. May they find help, hope and comfort in the good works and sharing of God’s people this Lent.

We pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear our Prayer

Let us pray for our parents. That God may help them to guide us always in what is right and true.

We pray to the Lord... Lord, Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for each other. That God may give us His strength to pray, to share and to be kind to one another this Lent.

We pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Our Father:

Closing Prayer: “Coming Home Prayer” by Eve Lyons

Based on the Jewish Traveler’s Prayer

May it be Your will,
Hashem, my G-d and G-d of my ancestors
to lead me home in peace,
direct my steps, my words, my thoughts in peace.

May I be able to see
[your] home as the sanctuary it is,
even when the world outside
rages and thrashes.

May You rescue me from every foe,
every impossible boss, every stolen hour,
every lost dream, from all other punishments
seeping into my life.

May You make my life a blessing
for others around me
even when I am anxious,
scared, or sad. Even when
the apartment is a mess or
I feel not good enough. And when
nothing is good enough for me.
Especially when nothing is good enough for me.

May You hear my prayer
because You are a G-d who hears prayer.
Micah went on his way
and told the people:
“Do justice, love mercy,
walk humbly with your God.”

To this I aspire
yet it seems constantly
out of reach.
For your salvation I do long Hashem
I do long Hashem for your salvation

For your salvation I do long Hashem
I do long Hashem for your salvation

Send an angel to protect me,
And all those I love. **AMEN**

Closing Song: “My Heart, Your Home” by Hillsong
(available on iTunes)

We're on our Way, But Where are We Headed?

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Theme

We are on the journey, but where are we headed? This prayer service explores such questions as: “Who am I, Where am I headed? and Am I inviting God to journey with me?” — all fitting questions for the beginning of Lent.

Special Note

This prayer service can be one part of a two-part series when used in conjunction with the “Clean Out Your Backpack” Reconciliation Service.

Materials

backpack
driver's license
cell phone
laptop
pocket mirror
teenager's personal memento
pencils, one per participant
Reflection sheet (*see end of service*)
a basket

Gathering Reflection

“Where Are We Headed?”

Who wants to be a millionaire?
Who wants to marry a millionaire?
Who knows how to spell the word *greed*?
We're on our way, but where are we headed?

First grader brings a gun to school.
Teenage girl runs away from home.
We're on our way, but where are we headed?

Nancy gossips about Ann in the cafeteria.
Ann disrespects Natalie in Math class.
Natalie ignores Maria because she's a Latina.
We're on our way, but where are we headed?

A Church bursts at the seams for the funeral of an 11-year-old girl.
The sun peaks through the clouds for twenty minutes or so.
The world is starting to turn.
We're on our way, but where are we headed?

I struggle to understand myself.
I see the path before me.
Others motion for me to catch up.
We're on our way, but where are we headed?

Setting of the Altar

A student enters the site lines of the worship space wearing a backpack. As the "What's in Your Backpack?" reflection below is read, the student stands at the altar and pulls out the items noted. The contents of the backpack are then used to set the altar.

Reflection

"What's in Your Backpack?"

Student enters wearing backpack.

All of us have become quite familiar with the importance of a backpack. It serves the fundamental purpose of carrying our needed items as we move through the day. Filled with books, pens, calculator, wallet, cell phone, laptop, we carry with us the things we need to negotiate our busy lives. At school we know where we're going, we know what we need, and we carry it all on our backs.

The season of Lent asks us to reflect on the larger picture, the more complex journey, the paths we have chosen — the *business*, not just the *busyness*, of our lives — where the demands are greater, the negotiations are more costly, and the burdens more heavy.

Student takes off and digs through backpack and pulls out items as they are described.

For most of us, our wallets contain our *license or Student Body card*, which summarizes the basics — height, weight, hair color and age. The season of Lent asks us to look deeper and ask ourselves these questions:

- Do I know who I am?
- Do I take the time to *find out* who I am?
- Am I faithful to my own values?

Most of us have *calendars* on our cellphones so that we remember the dates, the meetings, the assignments. These calendars are our life-lines in a sea of appointments, meetings and busy schedules. Lent asks us to evaluate our lives more closely ...

- Do I know where I am headed?
- Do I know who I want to become (not just what I want to be)?
- Am I faithful to the path that will take me there?

Backpacks in schools are filled with *books or ibooks* meant to be read so that when we take tests we'll know the answers. Lent presents its own set of questions ...

- Do I understand what truth is?
- Do I see the truth in all things?
- Do I listen to the truth when it is spoken to me?

At an all-girls school, you'll likely find a *mirror* in the backpack for applying make-up and checking to see how we look to others. Lent asks us to think about how we look to ourselves ...

- Do I treat myself with dignity and respect?
- Do I strive to be honest with myself in all things?
- Do I consider myself a person of integrity?

Some of us carry *mementos* in our backpacks — of those we love and those we've lost, of faith and belief. Lent asks us the "God questions" ...

- Is God part of the journey I am on?
- Is God welcome to walk with me through life?

I often carry my cell phone in my backpack, so I can enjoy music when I have free time. Lent asks us to listen ...

- Am I listening to the Spirit in my life?
- Am I listening to, and looking for, life's beauty?
- Is there time or space for creativity and joy in my life?

Finally, my cell phone contains the phone numbers of my friends. These numbers help us keep in touch. Lent asks us ...

- Who are my companions?
- Are these people helping me to get where I need to go?
- Are they leading me to places of peace and fulfillment?
- Am I helping my friends on *their* journeys?

Lent is about the journey to Easter. Lent is about the journey of our lives. What are you carrying around in your Lenten backpack?

Certainly we're on our way, but where are we headed?

Song

"Your Love Defends Me" by Matt Maher (*available on iTunes*)

Scripture Reading

Joel 2:12-18

Reading by Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself; and the fact that I *think* I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust You always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Distribution of Ashes

“May the journey of Lent lead you to Christ Jesus”

Song

“Hosea” by Gregory Norbert (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Prayers of the Faithful

Invite the congregation to participate in spontaneous Prayers of Petition.

Reflection

Participants will be asked to reflect on these questions.

- *Do I know who I am?*
- *Do I know where I am headed?*
- *Do I seek the truth?*
- *Do I invite God to be a part of my journey?*

After some reflection time, each participant will choose one of the four questions to concentrate on during Lent.

Participants will then write, on their reflection sheet they have received, a phrase that indicates their willingness to work on their chosen question during Lent. Participants are then invited forward in groups to place their paper backpack sheets in the basket.

Closing Prayer

We gather our prayers in hopes that during this Lenten season we will come to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the choices that influence our lives. May this Lenten season encourage us to seek the truth in all things. May this Lenten journey draw us ever closer to You. Amen.

Closing Song

“Strength for the Journey” by Michael John Poirier

(Sheet music - https://www.pinevalleypublishing.com/files/strength_for_the_journey_sm.pdf)

Reflection Sheet

Which question will you reflect on during Lent?

Do I know who I am?

Do I know where I am headed?

Do I seek the truth?

Do I invite God to be part of my journey?

Which question will you reflect on during Lent?

Do I know who I am?

Do I know where I am headed?

Do I seek the truth?

Do I invite God to be part of my journey?

Which question will you reflect on during Lent?

Do I know who I am?

Do I know where I am headed?

Do I seek the truth?

Do I invite God to be part of my journey?

Hide and Seek With God

Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

Theme

Occasionally in our relationships with God and others, we hide behind our “busyness” and our self-induced isolation. We sometimes also hide our feelings. Lent is a time for us to come out of our hiding places and return to God.

Materials

Hide and Seek Reflection Sheet (*see end of service*)

pencils, one per participant

two baskets

Gathering Reflection

Invite three or four students to create an improvisation about the simple game of “hide and seek.” Ask them to include a person counting while everyone else hides, the search, and someone being found. The entire improv should last about three minutes.

“Reflection on Hide and Seek”

Funny thing about hide and seek ...

The purpose of the game is to find a really good hiding place,
But eventually everyone wants to be found.

Sitting and waiting,

We feel excited and hope that our hiding place
Will be good enough to keep us from being noticed.

As the one who is “it” approaches, we crouch down,
Slow our breathing and remain completely still,
Not making a sound, so we won’t get caught.

Our anxiety builds as we feel the presence of the one
Who seeks us, watching their every movement,
Praying we will be overlooked.

If we are passed over, initially we feel excited,
Impressed with our choice of place, and proud of
Our ability to become invisible to the one who seeks us.

Sitting there, just a little longer, our excitement fades,
And our bodies begin to cramp.

Soon boredom creeps in, and we slowly become disturbed by the isolation we have chosen. We begin to feel lonely because we are separated from our friends.

We sit and wonder if we should come out from our shelter and settle for defeat? Or should we hold tight and see if the one who is “it” will persist in looking?

We are forced to make a choice between the seeming victory of isolation or the defeat of community.

Funny game, “hide and seek.”
We’re not supposed to want to be found,
But something in us hopes and prays that the
One who is “it” will never stop looking.

Meditation

“How Do I Hide From God?”

Let’s reflect for a moment on how our everyday lives have become a game of hide and seek. Where do we choose to run and hide from ourselves, others and God? How many different directions have we gone in? In what places have we chosen to hide?

Do we duck behind the nearest debris box, filled with reams of paper and unfinished projects? Are our appointment calendars filled to the brim with places to go and things to do? Are we simply too busy to care for ourselves, or to give our attention to God? Do we give ourselves the time and space to really experience our lives or are we on a treadmill leading nowhere?

(Pause)

Or perhaps we choose to duck under a fence or behind a wall. At first the wall seems to provide us with a place of security and safety. But in reality it separates us from those we love. Walls are physical, but they can also be emotional, like a wall of frozen feelings.

Have we allowed ourselves to harbor negative feelings towards others? Have we put up walls between ourselves and those we love? Maybe we have been hurt by someone and are afraid to let them know. Maybe we have allowed those hurts to turn our hearts to stone. What walls have we put up and chosen to hide behind?

(Pause)

Bushes can be great hiding places, although they do not cover you completely. The trick with bushes is to blend in, fade into them, disappear and try to pretend that we are actually part of them. Fading and disappearing into a crowd can be a very effective form of hiding. Instead of showing the world who we are, we simply blend in and become much less than who we were meant to be.

In what ways do we hide behind others? Have we remained silent when we should have spoken up? Have we allowed others to dictate who we should be, how we should act, what we should wear, and who our friends are? Have we traded our true colors, our true selves, for something else, merely to fit in? Have we sunk into the crowd of Sunday church goers so as not to deal with our own relationship with God? Do we allow others to take care of all the religious stuff so we don't have to? Fitting in, blending into the crowd, can at times be very comforting; but we lose something of ourselves in the process.

(Pause)

During our everyday game of hide and seek, alleys can sometimes appear to be the ideal spot for hiding — dark, isolated places often filled with many distractions. We could occupy ourselves for quite a long time. Alleys isolate us and sometimes lead us in directions we would rather not go. Isolating ourselves can be a very effective way of hiding. We isolate ourselves in many ways — by not sharing our feelings, not returning texts or phone calls, going to our room and closing the door, putting on headphones, refusing to talk, or simply making ourselves “unavailable.”

How have you isolated yourself from those you love? How have you isolated yourself from God? What kinds of things cause you to isolate yourself? Are you moving in the right direction in your life, or have you taken a wrong turn down an isolated alley?

(Pause)

In the game of hide and seek there is always a home base, a place in which we are safe without having to hide anymore, where we can join our friends and talk about our experiences, where we can find understanding. Home base is the place where God waits for us, hoping that we will choose to come and find rest.

In your life today, what keeps you from home base? What keeps you from being yourself, from being open and honest? What gets in the way of really experiencing your life rather than just passing through it? How do you hide from yourself, others or God?

Reflection

When you entered the chapel this morning, you were given a reflection sheet. Take a few moments now to reflect on what you hide from in your own life?

Participants will bring their reflection papers with them during the Distribution of Ashes (below) and will be invited to place them into the baskets provided.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 18:10-15

Distribution of Ashes

“Return Home to God”

Invite students to place their reflection papers in the baskets provided.

Song

“By My Side” by Stephen Schwartz (*available on iTunes*)

Prayers of the Faithful

As a symbolic gesture, invite a few students to hold up the baskets containing the reflection papers while the petitions are being presented.

God of Mercy, this Lenten season, seek us out, draw us from our hiding places so that we may find a home in You. Give us the courage to stand in Your light so that Your love and mercy will be more fully revealed.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, we call upon You during this Lenten season to mend our hearts from all that troubles them, to heal us of our sins, to renew us and make us whole. We pray that we may grow in Your Mercy and be filled with Your compassion.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

God of all creation, we pray for those among us who are sick, homeless or living in poverty. We pray also for those who care for them, that they may be filled with Your strength and compassion. For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord God, we pray for an end to violence and injustice in our world. We pray for those who are victims of war and gun violence. May we strive to be women and men of peace, peacemakers in a world so much in need.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd. You seek those who are lost and those who have gone into hiding. Your search for Your children is tireless, and Your love is enduring.

Give us the courage this Lenten season to make the journey home to You. Give us the strength to be honest so that the light of Your truth will shine more brightly through us. Help us step out from behind a million distractions and the walls we have built, to embrace You more fully. Lord Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd who calls us home.

Amen.

Hide and Seek With God Reflection Questions

1. In what ways do I hide from

Myself -

Others -

God -

2. Why do I hide?

3. What can I do this Lent to help myself get back to “homebase”?

“Hide N’ Seek” by Erin Hanson

... But the thing about playing hide and go seek,
Is you got so good at the game,
That you found yourself hiding in everyday life,
Blocking your ears as the whole world called your name,
All the people you left are the seekers,
Yet are unaware that you need to be found,
How could anyone know that you’re hidden,
When they forget your no longer around, ...

Life on the Ark

Reconciliation Service

Theme

Noah, a man of great faith, built an ark and sailed off into the promised rainbow of God. Yet, during the journey, life on the ark was likely a difficult community experience. This prayer service explores the struggles we experience in community and our need for reconciliation.

Materials and Characters

“Life on the Ark” reflection sheets, one per participant (*see end of service*)
pencils, one per participant
8 student actors (*see below*)

Gathering Reflection

This morning we gather together for reconciliation. During this season of Lent we take time to reflect on all that is unfinished in us.

We take time to reflect on the beasts within us, with whom we struggle. We reflect on the things that limit us, hold us back, cause us discomfort.

We examine ourselves in relationships — the difficulties we have had with our parents, our friends, and all those with whom we live and share our lives.

We stand this morning before a God who loves and cares for us, a God who has the power to heal all that is broken within us, a God who sends us rainbows in the midst of our storms.

And as we gather this morning, let us open our hearts before God and ask for God’s forgiveness.

Opening Prayer

God of all creation, we come to You today, during this holy season of Lent, to ask for Your mercy. We know that we don’t always act as we should and at times we hurt one another. We ask that You accept our prayers for forgiveness and make pure our intentions. Give us hearts like Noah’s, who was open to Your love and ever faithful to Your call. Let us take refuge on the ark of Your love, that we might find the rainbow of peace.

Skit

“A Conversation Between God and Noah”

The script for this skit is taken from Bill Cosby’s “Bill Cosby Is A Very Funny Fellow”. This skit can be a very humorous conversation between God and Noah. For it to be successful, the individual playing the part of Noah should be a student who is very witty and comfortable in front of a large group.

The person playing God needs to be hidden somewhere in the worship space, not visible to the participants. This person should be directed to hold the microphone very close to their mouth; this will produce the ominous voice of God quite effectively.

God: Noah!

Noah: Somebody call?

God: Noah!

Noah: Who is that?

God: It's the Lord, Noah!

Noah: Right! Where are Ya? Whadda Ya want? I've been good!

God: I want you to build an ark!

Noah: Right! What's an ark?

God: Get some wood, and make it 300 cubits by 80 cubits by 40 cubits.

Noah: Right! What's a cubit?

God: Don't worry about that, Noah. When you get the ark built, go out into the world and collect all the animals two by two and put them into the ark.

Noah: Right! Who is this really? What's going on? How come You want me to do all these weird things!?

God: It's going to rain for 40 days and 40 nights.

Noah: Right! Am I being punked??

Reading

"All Aboard" (adapted from Genesis 6:9-22)

A long, long time ago there lived a man named Noah. Noah was an accomplished carpenter and a family man. Noah had a wife and three handsome sons. Noah was a good and faithful man, and so God found favor with him.

One day God spoke to Noah and said, "Noah, I want you to build an ark." After giving specific instructions, Noah went about the grand project by following all the instructions given.

Upon the ark's completion, God said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, and take with you two of every kind."

And so Noah went out into the neighborhood and started inviting them two by two, and onto the ark he took two ferocious lions, two wild grisly bears, and ...

- two teachers from the Mercy English department
- two seniors anxious for graduation
- two football players from the high school down the road
- two DJ's from the local radio station
- two Sisters from the convent
- two young couples headed for divorce
- two soldiers from Iraq
- two businessmen from Japan
- two homeless women from downtown
- two Catholics, two Jews, two Muslims, two atheists
- two migrants from El Salvador
- two Republicans and two Democrats

And so the whole lot of them sailed off together, trying to make their way through 40 days and 40 nights of rain and togetherness.

Song "The River" by Garth Brooks (*available on iTunes*)

Conversations from the Ark

Invite six students to create three very simple improvisations between the following three couples: Noah and his wife, a peacock and a seagull, a lion and a monkey — or any combination of your choice!

The following are some possible story-lines:

- Noah's wife is becoming annoyed with him because she has to do all the cleaning on the ark. Noah can't help her because he is trying to keep all the passengers from arguing with one another.
- The peacock is somewhat arrogant about the beauty of his feathers, and the seagull is getting tired of it.
- The monkey constantly taunts the lion, charging that the lion isn't really the king of the jungle.

Scripture Reading

Genesis 8:15-20, 9:8-17

Reflections

Life on the ark — sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? Bring together different people and there's conflict. Lots of it! That's why we're here today — because this ark, this ship, this school is seeking the rainbow of God's peace, but we're not there yet. We need to seek forgiveness for the times we lose faith and forget about the rainbow ahead. We need to seek reconciliation with our brothers and sisters with whom we have set sail. And so we pray ...

Prayer of Reconciliation

Presider

Let us look into our hearts, acknowledge our sins, and pray for God's healing. Please join me in the Act of Contrition.

All

I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts, in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do; and I ask the Blessed Virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Presider

The Lord our God is merciful. Let us pray that our sins may be forgiven and that God will bring calm and peace to our stormy hearts.

The response to the following prayers is "Lord have mercy."

You made a covenant with Noah ...

You promise a rainbow of peace ...

You look with compassion on our frailties ...

You set us afloat on an ocean of mercy ...

You call our wandering hearts home ...

You ask us to forgive one another...

You seek our conversion from sin ...

You rain down Your compassion on us ...

And so we pray in the words You taught us ...

The Lord's Prayer

Individual Confessions

While participants are waiting for private confession, they can be working on the "Life on the Ark" reflection sheet, which follows the "Closing Blessing" of this service.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God, draw near to us. In the presence of each other and Your Church, we confess that we are sinners. Through the ministry of Your Church, free us from all sin so that renewed in the Spirit we may give You praise. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Closing Blessing

Every good gift comes from You, O God. May You grant us grace and every blessing, and keep us safe.

May God grant us unwavering faith like Noah's. May God grant us constant hope and love that endures.

May God bring peace to the storms of our days and light to the darkness of our nights. Merciful God, strengthen us, Your people.

May we remain faithful to You and always rejoice in Your mercy.

May Almighty God bless you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Life on the Ark Reflection Sheet:

1. What storms am I experiencing right now in my life?

2. Noah was a man of great faith. Am I a person of faith? What can I do to become a person of great faith like Noah?

3. With whom do I need to reconcile?

4. What stops me from reconciling with this person?

5. Where is hope lacking in my life?

6. In what ways do I need to make peace?

Fences

Reconciliation Service

Theme

Fences can be a useful tools to mark the edges of property, but can also be an apt symbol for how we close ourselves off and isolate from others.

Materials

Fences Reflection Sheet, one for each participant (see end of service)
pencils

Opening Song: “Open My Eyes Lord” by Jesse Manibusan (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Reading: “Dancing on a White Picket Fence” by Nora Wooten

I saw her
when she was
dancing on a white picket fence.
The sunlight dappled her
autumn hair and the freckles on her nose
as she twirled in the breeze.

Closed eyes
while the melody
played on her skin.
Her feet knew the way
like they had been dancing
for a thousand years.

A daisy
flipped behind her left ear
as she swayed, skipped, and jumped.
The world was far away
for her frozen behind her in time.

But the moment ceased
as a car horn blew
and she was gone when I turned back.

I used to return looking for
the girl on the white picket fence.
But now that fence is gray;
the paint is gone,
and it is lonely.
But maybe someday
a girl will return to dance
on that white picket fence.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Reflection

There are many types of fences. White picket fences, barbed wire fences, razor edged and cycloned fences, border fences. Different types of fences bring different reflections - yet all fences have things in common. Fences are tools to mark a territory, to protect, to keep us in, to keep others out. Fences are barriers, structures that close us in, separate us - one from another. Their purpose is to protect - yet by their very nature - they inhibit, divide, isolate and create distance. Fences can be a symbolic image for self reflection and spiritual growth.

To continue this meditation I invite you to close your eyes and listen as I ask the following reflection questions:

(Ask the following questions slowly, allowing reflection time for each.)

In what areas of my life have I constructed fences to separate myself from others?
How do I hide behind fences or walls in my life?
Have I built fences between me and the members of my family? My friends?
How has my behavior created distance between me and my loved ones?
Do I welcome God into my life, or do I create obstacles to keep God at a distance?
How do I hide behind fences or walls to protect myself?
What is the one obstacle in my life that I wish to be freed from?

Song “Just As I Am” by Matt Maher
(available at www.mattmahermusic.com)

Prayer of Reconciliation

Presider

Let us look into our hearts, acknowledge our sins, and pray for God’s healing. Please join me in the Act of Contrition.

All

I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts, in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do; and I ask the Blessed Virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Presider

The Lord Our God is merciful. Let us pray that our sins may be forgiven and that God will open our closed hearts.

The response to the following prayers is “Lord have mercy.”

You made a covenant with your people ...

You promise a path to peace ...

You look with compassion on our frailties ...

You invite us to a banquet of Mercy ...

You call our lonely hearts home ...

You ask us to welcome and forgive one and other ...

You seek our conversion from sin ...

You break down our fences and walls with Your transforming love ...

And so you we pray in the words You taught us ...

Our Father

Individual Confessions

While participants are waiting for private confession, they can be working on the “Fences” reflection sheet, which follows the “Closing Prayer” of this service.

Closing Prayer

Lord, remove all fences that keep us from drawing near to You.

Lord, remove all walls that keep us from receiving Your love.

Lord, remove all obstacles that keep us from receiving Your healing.

Lord, remove all barriers that keep us from fully answering Your call in our lives.

Merciful God, draw near to us. In the presence of each other and Your Church, we confess that we are sinners. Through the ministry of Your Church, free us from all sin so that renewed in the Spirit we may give You praise. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Fences Reflection Sheet

1. How do I hide behind fences or walls in my life?
2. In what areas of my life have I constructed fences to separate myself from others?
3. How has my behavior, created distance between me and my loved ones?
4. Do I welcome God into my life, or do I create obstacles to keep God at a distance?
5. What is the one obstacle in my life that I wish to be freed from?
6. Identify one step I can take to release myself from this obstacle.

Clean Out Your Backpack

Reconciliation Service

Theme

We all carry things around with us that we need to unload. This prayer service uses the backpack as a symbol for the things we need to let go of, if we are to be reconciled with others.

Materials

prayer leader's backpack

“Clean Out Your Backpack” reflection sheets, one per participant (*see end of prayer service*)

pencils, one per participant

Special Note

This prayer service can be used as a two-part series when used in conjunction with the “We’re on Our Way, But Where Are We Headed?” Ash Wednesday Prayer Service.

Gathering Reflection

During the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we spent some time reflecting on the contents of our backpacks, the items we carry with us on our journey. And as we noted at that liturgy, Lent is a time when we are asked to dig a little deeper.

Have you taken the time lately to look inside your backpack? We’re so busy shoving stuff in and pulling stuff out, I wonder if we even know what’s in there!

The prayer leader begins to take items out of his/her backpack, giving a brief description of each object inside. (Note: Look through the backpack before the service so there aren’t any embarrassing surprises!)

Have you ever noticed that your backpack gets uncomfortable if you don’t clean it out on a regular basis?

Our backpacks get *heavy*, become a burden to carry. We start to wonder if it is even worth bringing them with us. We ask ourselves, “Do I really need it? Maybe I should leave it behind.”

When our backpacks need to be cleaned out, things inside it start *poking us*. We’re not even sure what they are. We try to rearrange things, but something continues to poke at us.

When we open the backpack, we have a hard time getting to what we want because everything else is in the way. What was once new, clean and simple has become *cluttered*.

Cleaning out our backpacks is a walk down memory lane. It reminds us of where we have been. Cleaning helps us *sort* things out. It helps us determine what is important. It helps us decide what

we need to let go of, what is still in process, and what should be put in a safe place because we treasure it.

How many of you are getting the clue?
What am I really talking about?
How does this relate to reconciliation?

Response

The participants respond to the question “How does this relate to Reconciliation?” The prayer leader summarizes the participants’ responses to the question. This summary can serve as the reflection or homily.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 51:1-12

Song

“Return Again” by Shaina Noll (*available on iTunes*)

Gospel Reading

Luke 15:3-7

Litany

For the times I have held on to past hurts and annoyances and have allowed them to burden my relationships ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have been short with my students because I allowed the clutter of my life to take precedence over people ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have encouraged gossip among my classmates at the expense of another person ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have been impatient with my students because they did not fit into my own schedule of learning ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have not allowed my friends to change and grow. For the times my expectations have become a burden for those I love ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have held onto past experiences and have allowed them to affect my teaching ...

We ask for God’s Mercy.

For the times I have not been able to express my anger in a constructive way ...
We ask for God's Mercy.

For the times I have not contributed my own truth to an important discussion ...
We ask for God's Mercy.

Prayer of Reconciliation

Presider

Let us look into our hearts, acknowledge our sins, and pray for God's healing. Please join me in the Act of Contrition.

All

I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts, in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do; and I ask the Blessed Virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Presider

The Lord our God is merciful. Let us pray that our sins may be forgiven and that God will bring order and peace to our cluttered hearts.

The response to the following prayers is "Lord, have Mercy."

You lift our burdens ...
You bring order and peace into our chaotic lives ...
You look with compassion on our sinfulness ...
You love us when we don't even love ourselves ...
You call our lost hearts home ...
You ask us to forgive one another ...
You seek our turning from sin ...
You call us to *be* more, *love* more, and *give* more ...
And so we pray in the words You taught us ...

The Lord's Prayer

Presider

Merciful God, draw near to us. In the presence of each other and Your Church, we confess that we are sinners. Through the ministry of Your Church, free us from all sin so that, renewed in the Spirit, we may give You praise. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Individual Confessions

While participants are waiting for private confession, they can spend time on the “Clean Out Your Backpack” reflection sheet, which follows the Closing Prayer of this service.

Closing Prayer

Every good gift comes from the God of Mercy. May God grant us peace and every blessing and keep us safe on our journey.

May God grant us unwavering faith, constant hope, and love that endures.

May God help us bring order to our relationships and make us women and men of peace.
May God lift the burdens we carry and set us on the path to new life.

Merciful God, grant us the wisdom to discern what to leave behind and what to carry with us.

Fit us with everything we need to navigate through a confusing world. Light the path before us, clearing the way to love.

Merciful God, strengthen us, Your people. Help us remain faithful to You as we rejoice in Your Mercy.

May Almighty God bless us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Clean Out Your Backpack

Reflection Sheet

1. Which item in your backpack represents the most important value in your life right now?
2. Which item in your backpack represents that which causes you the most conflict in your life right now?
3. What clutter needs to be cleared from your “symbolic backpack”?
4. What burdens you right now?
5. What needs to be sorted out right now?
6. Identify one action you can take to improve your relationship with God.

The Way of the Cross

Holy Week Guided Meditation

Theme

The purpose of this guided meditation is to immerse students in Jesus' experience as he made his way to the cross. This meditation can be used as a preparation for the *May Peace Prevail on Earth* prayer service or stand on its own as a classroom activity. The *May Peace Prevail on Earth* prayer service follows this meditation.

Materials

art paper, pencils and markers

(Prep for Meditation)

Make yourself comfortable... Close your eyes, and begin to let yourself relax..

Simply become aware of the rhythm of your breathing, your breath moving in and moving out...

Now imagine that the area around you is being filled with a gentle light... This light conveys to you a sense of love and healing...

Imagine it begins to swirl around you, starting with your feet, and moving upward around your entire body... As it swirls around you it begins to relax each part of you that it touches...

Breathe in this loving and healing energy... Feel it enter each cell in your entire body... Exhale any tension in your body... Simply let go of any anxiety or any fatigue...

Know that you are being sustained by a presence that is loving and healing, even when you are not aware of it.... *

(Pause for a moment)

Begin to imagine that you are in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' trial. It is hot, and you can hear the crowds outside gathering around Pilate's Palace. You watch as guards push Jesus into the room where you are standing. His hands are tied in front of him. He is bloody from being beaten and there is a crown of thorns pressed into his head.

Before Jesus can make his way to Pilate's chair, the guards shove him and Jesus falls to the stone floor. Pilate shouts at him, "Get Up!", and slowly, painfully Jesus struggles to his feet.

You listen as Pilate commands in a loud voice, “You are charged with treason, You have claimed to be the King of the Jews, a direct challenge to Roman Authority,

You shall be crucified.” In an instant Jesus is grabbed from behind and forced out of the room.

Outside, the crowds have grown larger and more restless. As the day unfolds it grows hotter and more humid. The movement of the crowd swirls the dust into the air. *(Pause)*

The guards appear atop the steps of Pilate’s palace with a beaten and bruised Jesus, covered in a red garment across his chest, draping at his side. The sound of the crowd swells in response, some crying out, “Crucify Him!” Sobs can be heard as griefs undertones fill in the silent heaviness.

Two soldiers break into the crowd carrying a heavy wooden beam. They heave it onto the ground. It lands heavy on the road and dust billows up into the faces of the onlookers.

Jesus’ hands are untied, and he is shoved to the ground. The guard’s commands echo through the crowd, “Pick it up.” Jesus, weak from the beatings, strains to lift the beam atop his shoulders. As he reaches an upright posture he cries out in pain as the wood of the beam skids across the open wounds, plaguing his worn body. He steadies himself, slowly he turns, and begins to walk the road of his cross, lined by onlookers, some jeering while others are gripped in silent grief.

As he takes each step, his feet sink into the dry gravelly road. Lifting his heavy legs, one strenuous step after another. Moving slowly but rhythmically forward, Jesus catches sight of his mother in the distance. His mother steps out and separates herself from the crowd and faces Jesus. Her face is soaked with tears. She lifts her hand towards him, as he slowly makes his way to her.

When they meet, Jesus stops and looks into the eyes of his mother. She says nothing, she is silent. Their eyes meet and each is soothed, by the love of the other. An ominous silence overtakes the crowd. Time seems to stand still. *(Pause for a bit)*

Abruptly, the command “Keep Moving,” shatters the silence, as Jesus is shoved forward by the soldiers.

The wood of the cross, pressing upon his sweat drenched shoulders. He struggles to keep his balance, his brow dripping with sweat, he lumbers slowly forward.

“Jesus”, a soft warm voice calls to him. “Jesus” comes the voice again. He turns slightly to see a woman. She steps towards him and with her hand wipes his face with a cool damp cloth. A moment of relief for him as the cool cloth touches his burning face. Again she says, “Jesus” in soft soothing tones. *(Pause a bit)*

A hand violently reaches in and rips the cloth from her hands and tosses it to the dirt. “Get back,” the guard roars. Weak and barely maintaining a fragile balance, Jesus tumbles to the ground.

In mounting frustration the guard grabs a bystander and commands, “You, pick up the beam, and carry it.” Fearful, Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to his feet, and hoists the wooden beam across his own shoulders. The two move slowly forward. Simon mindful of Jesus’ weakened state, slows his pace. The two, side by side walk slowly, silently towards Golgotha, the place of death.

The sun remains merciless, as the heat continues to rise. The crowd presses in as the road to the cross narrows. Jesus is parched with thirst, his garments damp with sweat and blood. Each step is slow, steady, he is vacant and empty. Surrounded by hatred, he is utterly alone.

Weeping and crying can be heard as women gather to reach out to him in the last moments of his life. He lifts his worn face and meets their gaze. “We are here Jesus, We’re here ...” One sobs out in grief as she extends her hand in a futile effort to reach for him.

As his battered body moves beyond, they turn to each other
“I can’t believe this is happening”
“Our teacher”
“He healed my child”
“He taught us about God, he loved us”

Their words trail off as a silence falls upon them.
The image of Jesus, gets smaller and smaller, as it fades into the darkened place of death.

As the crowds begin to disperse a woman is left alone sitting on the side of the road.

Compelled, you walk towards her. As she hears your approach she lifts her eyes to meet yours. You sit down. Let the woman share with you what she knows of Jesus. Listen.

(Long Pause)

Taking all the time that you need, and only when you are ready, gently bring your awareness back to this room.

Response:

(This meditation was a representation of Jesus' journey to the cross. It was filled with rich imagery and encounters between Jesus and the people on the way. Take some time now to creatively represent the most powerful or poignant moment that you experienced during this meditation. You can represent that moment in whatever way you would like, through color, words, images, or symbols.)

Sharing:

(Students share their art with the class.)

**Finding Healing from Within, Level II, Kathleen Denison, 1991.*

May Peace Prevail on Earth

Holy Week - Critical Concerns - Non Violence

Theme

This prayer service was used during Holy Week and was paired with an in-class guided meditation called *The Way of the Cross*. *The Way of the Cross* meditation immediately precedes this prayer service.

This prayer service addresses the pervasive violence we are frequently exposed to in our communities, nation and throughout the world. Recent events were chosen as examples. Faculty and students who shared some personal connection to the event were asked to share their personal reflections. Although this prayer service addresses current events, campus ministers can use it as a template and revise it using more timely events. This prayer service includes the dedication of an International Peace Pole. A peace pole would be a wonderful addition to any Mercy campus but the prayer service can stand alone without the dedication.

Materials

Candleabra

Matches

Video screens and laptop for music video

International Peace Pole (if desired)

To order a peace pole for your campus:

<https://peacepoleproject.org/order.html>

Prelude:

“Bang Bang Bang”, by Tracy Chapman (Music Video)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrRA7WMI1ks

Introduction:

During your religion classes this week, through a guided meditation, you witnessed the suffering of Jesus while he made his way to the cross. The purpose of this meditation was to give you a mere glimpse into Jesus’ experience of being unfairly accused, beaten, convicted of a crime he did not commit, and struggling towards the cross of his death, amid cries of hatred and violence.

As we enter the holiest week of the Church year - we are mindful of the violence perpetrated on the innocent. The suffering of Our Lord Jesus and the suffering of high school students, Muslims at prayer, children, people of color, women and the earth.

Lately, it seems each day brings a story of more violence, a new shooting, hateful voices continue to gain ground and seep into the everydayness of our lives. As we prepare to remember the suffering of our Lord Jesus through the rituals of Holy Week, we remember those whose names we do not know, nevertheless we remember. Through our recounting of their suffering - they are not forgotten.

Stoneman Douglas High School - Christine

During the last two weeks of March two students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School of Parkland Florida took their own lives. Sydney, a 2018 graduate of the School, ended her life. She survived the attack on Valentine's Day 2018 that killed 17 people at the Florida school -- including 14 students and three staff members. Sydney, 19, was a senior at the school during the massacre.

Calvin is the name of the second student who died. Calvin was a Sophomore and was 16 years old. Brittany Wright, Calvin's sister, said Calvin wanted to be an engineer, which inspired him to always find new projects around the house to challenge his skills.

(Personal reflection)

I understand what it means to lose a loved one in this way. I know what it feels like to live with the questions of why. Was there something I could have done?

I pray for the families and loved ones of Sydney and Calvin as they move on without them, I pray for them as they try to come to terms with the depth of their losses.

Lord Jesus, bring Sydney and Calvin to yourself and give them peace. Bring comfort and mercy to their loved ones. We pray for the entire community of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that their school community may find comfort during this time. ...

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

(Christine lights a candle)

Christ Church Shooting - Nora

On Friday March 15, an armed gunman entered *Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre* in Christ Church, New Zealand and murdered 50 people during Friday prayers. The gunman livestreamed the first attack on Facebook Live. 50 other people were injured in the attack. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the attacks as "as one of New Zealand's darkest days." The attacks have been linked to an increase in white supremacy and alt-right extremism globally.

At a prayer service in support of the grieving Muslim community Imam Gamal Fouda told the gathered crowd, “We are broken-hearted, but we are not broken. We are alive, we are together, we are determined to not let anyone divide us”

(Personal Reflection)

As a Muslim, and a member of the Mercy High School community, it is hard for me to express how I feel about the fact, that 50 of my Muslim brothers and sisters were gunned down during Friday prayers. They were participating in a religious ritual and were defenseless when they were murdered. As someone who values my faith and the rituals of Islam, it is painful for me that others instill hate towards my community. My heart and prayers go out to the Muslim community of Christ Church, and to all Muslims throughout the world especially those who have become targets because of their faith.

I have a quote from Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, “Oh God, You are peace, from You comes peace, to You returns peace. Revive us with a salvation of peace, and lead us to Your abode of peace.” I just want to add something from my Islamic faith. We believe that, “If you kill one person, it is as if you killed all mankind”.

(Nora lights candle)

Racial Violence - Gary

In 2017 a survey called “Discrimination in America.” was conducted by the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Harvard School of Public Health*. While many surveys explore Americans’ beliefs about discrimination, this survey asked people about their own personal experiences with discrimination. Here’s mine.

(Personal Reflection)

I am a black man who has grown up in the United States. I know what it is like to feel the sting of discrimination. As a middle-class, lighter-skinned black man I also know that many others suffered, and continue to suffer, a lot worse than me.

I grew up around a lot of white people. In elementary school, I remember being told that I was one of the “good ones” – not like the “bad ones” I was meant to understand; I was different.

I remember the way this kind of backhanded compliment stung me, but it took me a long time to understand why it hurt. In truth, though, the comment rings true. I am “good” by America’s standards, or at least “better”: my skin is lighter, most of the time I dress like a middle-class

professional and my manner of speech betrays a large degree of assimilation in the white American mainstream, for example, I use phrases like “manner of speech”.

But as many others have learned, there is no amount of assimilation that can shield you from racism in this country. According to the survey half of Black Americans have experienced racial slurs and negative comments; Roughly four in ten have experienced violence and threats or harassment. I am part of the 50% and one of the 4 in 10.

So, let me assure you that racism is real. I have experienced the pain of being overlooked and undervalued because I am black. I have a growing concern with the uptick in racial violence and this country's desensitization to racist rhetoric, and hate crimes. May each of us in this room stand up and be a voice against racial injustice.

(Gary lights candle)

Earth Violence - Charlotte

As we gather today to reflect on violence, we should be mindful of what we are doing to our planet. According to *NASA*, climate change has already had observable effects on the environment. Glaciers have shrunk, ice on rivers and lakes are breaking up sooner than predicted, plant and animal ranges have shifted, and lastly, trees are flowering sooner. Effects that scientists had projected in the past are now occurring, including the loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise and longer, more intense heat waves.

Scientists are confident that global temperatures will continue to rise in the future, largely due to greenhouse gases produced by human activities. The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*, which includes more than 1,300 scientists from the United States and other countries, forecasts a temperature rise of 2.5 to 10 degrees fahrenheit over the next century.

(Personal Reflection)

As a student of Mercy, I believe it is up to our generation to raise awareness regarding the damage done to the earth. May the current crisis be averted so we can take action and take meaningful strides towards battling the causes of climate change.

(Charlotte lights candle)

Sexual Violence - Sandy

Harvey Weinstein, the USA Gymnastics Team, Southern Baptist Communion, the Catholic Church. In the past year the news has seemed to explode with reports of sexual harrassment, sexual abuse and sexual assault. Although painful, these reports, bring to light a dark truth, that sexual abuse and assault permeate every aspect of our culture. Brave women from Hollywood, courageous teenage athletes, fearless Catholic children have come forward and told their stories.

(Personal Reflection)

As someone who has dedicated my heart and my life to the Catholic Church, the news within the last year has been terribly painful. It is beyond my understanding why anyone would not do anything they could to protect the innocence of a child. Although seeringly difficult, these truths about our Church need to be revealed. The Church needs to confront its demons, make reparations for its victims, hold to account leaders who have failed us, and enact safeguards for the vulnerable.

May all those who have been victims of sexual violence be comforted in their grief, may they be empowered to share their stories, may healing be theirs.

(Sandy lights candle)

Explanation of Unlit Candles

You can see that two candles remain unlit. During this penitential Lenten season, we look inward and take an honest look at who we are, where we fall short. This candle represents the anger and frustration that remains within each of us. The hurt and woundedness that seduces us into lashing out at others. May the darkness within each of us, be illuminated with the healing compassion of our Lord Jesus.

The other candle represents those who suffer in silence. Those whose lives are shrouded in anonmity, who are lost in a cycle of violence that seems to have no liberation. For those whose names we will never know - we pray - with a moment of silence

(Move to the International Peace Pole)

Dedication of the Peace Pole

“May Peace Prevail on Earth” is a call to peace written in several languages on all the Peace Poles planted throughout the world. Yearly many peace poles are planted on September 21st, a day proclaimed by the United Nations as the *International Day of Peace*.

More than 200,000 Peace Poles can be found around the world, in humble places like front yards, as well as in prominent areas such as the Pyramids in Egypt, Mt. Everest in Nepal, the War Museum in Viet Nam, the Allenby Bridge between Israel and Jordan, and of course, at the site of the baptism of Jesus.

It stands as a universal symbol of unity of all nations and all peoples, as one of hope that calls us to transcend the trappings of race, the human limitations of religion, the powerplay of politics. It emboldens us to join voices to spread the message of peace throughout the world.

So today is our Mercy Day of Peace, where we call all to reject violence and embrace Peace. Let us stand firmly with all those in the human family who work and pray for peace. Let us today, as women and men dedicate ourselves to sow love and understanding, to speak for mercy and compassion, and to work for justice and for the dignity of all people.

And so we pray.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy

O divine master grant that I may
not so much seek to be consoled as to console
to be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life
Amen

Recitation of Peace

(Refrain spoken in different languages: May peace prevail on earth)

For the places in our world that suffer from the despair of war and destruction of violence,

May Peace Prevail on Earth *(Tagalog)*

For victims of gun violence, and for our leaders that they may have the courage to enact sensible gun laws,

May Peace Prevail on Earth *(Spanish)*

For all people of color, who have been the victim of racial prejudice and hatred,

May Peace Prevail on Earth *(Chinese)*

May we remember the words of Jesus, "Let us treat others, as we wish to be treated,"

May Peace Prevail on Earth *(French)*

In hopes that we may come to see all people as our brothers and sisters,

May Peace Prevail on Earth *(English)*

School Alma Mater (sung)

Remembering



REMEMBERING

Every Mercy community develops its own particular story and creates its own history. The story of each of these communities furthers our understanding of the Mercy Mission. The retelling of our stories helps to deepen our bonds and continues to shape our identity in Mercy.

Storytelling — remembering and honoring our history — is very important in the life of our school communities on many levels. Primarily, our retelling highlights the underlying values of our community and serves as a teaching moment for our students. Our storytelling also reminds students that they are part of something larger than themselves. Students participate in the ongoing history of their own particular school and a tradition that spans more than 193 years.

In other instances, remembering serves as a way of ritualizing our goodbyes. At the close of a school year or at the loss of a member of our school community, remembering affords us the opportunity to grieve as a community. Done well, rituals of remembering provide a safe environment for faculty and students to grieve, lend support, and express themselves individually and communally.

Finally, rituals of remembering teach our students how to say goodbye and the importance of doing so. It encourages them to seek and celebrate the sacred in everyday life. Rituals such as these help our communities bring closure, say thanks, value what has been, and look forward to what will be.

***El Día de los Muertos* (The Day of the Dead)**

All Saints Activity

Theme

Honoring and remembering our loved ones who have died

Materials

long table

tablecloth

candles

flowers

cross

two baskets

two pads of note paper

several pencils

students bring photos of loved ones who have passed
(*altar decorations can be purchased at Amazon.com*)

Preparation

Using the above materials set up an altar in your classroom.

Reading: The Tradition

El Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) is a Mexican holiday that originated with the indigenous people more than 35,000 years ago. It was believed that during a month-long ritual, the dead came back to visit their families and loved ones. People viewed death as the continuation of life; instead of fearing death, they embraced it. *El Día de los Muertos* was a way of honoring the dead and celebrating their visit.

When the *Spanish Conquistadores* landed in Mexico, they tried to Christianize the ritual by moving it to coincide with All Saints Day and All Souls Day, which is when it is celebrated today.

Today *El Día de los Muertos* continues to be celebrated in Mexico, Latin America and the United States. During the celebration of *El Día de los Muertos*, people visit the cemetery where their loved ones are buried and decorate the gravesites with flowers and candles. They also bring picnic baskets and eat the favorite foods of their loved ones at the cemetery.

Nowadays, in the United States and in Mexico's larger cities, many families build altars in their homes to celebrate the feast. The altars are dedicated to the dead and are decorated with

photographs of the deceased, flowers, candles, incense, and sometimes food. *El Día de los Muertos* is a time for the deceased to return home and visit loved ones, feast on their favorite foods, and listen to their favorite music.

Honoring Our Loves Ones

As a way of honoring our loved ones who have passed I would like to invite you to come forward and write their names on the paper provided.

Song “To Where You Are” by Josh Groban (*available on iTunes*)

Closing Prayer by Azucena Zepeda

Most loving God, most merciful and holy One, we thank you for making us your holy children. Keep us close to you in this life, so we may grow in wisdom and love. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord, forever and ever Amen.

Optional Presentation:

<https://prezi.com/becpcwaw-uwu/dia-de-los-muertos-prayer-service/>
(must have flash player to launch link)

Celebrating *El Día de Los Muertos* at School

Celebrating Día de los Muertos with your entire school community can be a wonderful way to honor and remember the dead during the week before All Saints Day. To prepare an altar, set up a large table in a central location in the school building. Have interested students decorate the table with religious symbols, candles, flowers, and pads of paper for people to write on. You might also want to include two baskets in which names of the deceased loved ones can be placed. (The baskets can be brought up during the Offertory Procession at the All Saints Day liturgy.)

After the altar has been set up, invite members of the school community to add pictures or other symbolic objects that represent loved ones who have died. Also encourage students to visit the table and write on the paper provided, their loved ones' names and any remembrances they wish to add.

A nice addition to this idea is for Religion teachers to bring their classes to visit the altar. This gives students a chance to pray for their loved ones as a group.

Note

On the Friday following All Saints Day, take down the altar and carefully store all the objects that have been left on it. This way things can be safely returned to their owners without getting lost or damaged.

The Saints: A Compass for the Journey

All Saints Day Liturgy

Theme

The saints are a guide and compass for us, showing us the way.

Materials

processional banner (*see below*)

small plastic compasses, one per participant (*can be purchased at Amazon.com*)

Processional Banner

Invite students and staff to participate in the creation of a “digital” processional banner. The theme of the banner could be: “We should be like the compass that goes round its cycle without stirring from the center.... Our center is God.” — Catherine McAuley.” Participants can add images and names of individuals who have served or continue to serve as guides for them.

At Office Depot the digital image can be enlarged to the size of a processional banner for the liturgy.

Gathering Reflection

“We should be like the compass that goes round its cycle without stirring from the center.... Our center is God, from whom all our actions spring as from their source, and no exterior action should separate us.” — Catherine McAuley

Opening Song

“When the Saints Go Marching In”

(sheet music available at www.8notes.com/scores/11349.asp)

First Reading

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

Response

Psalm 24:3-7

Second Reading

1 John 3:1-3

Gospel

John 14:1-8

Homily

(The homilist should reflect on the quote from Catherine McAuley read during the Gathering Reflection and on the title of the liturgy, “The Saints: A Compass for the Journey.”)

Litany of Saints

Mary, Mother of Jesus,

Mary Magdalene,

Peter, Paul, Ambrose, Augustine and Benedict,

(names of those from your school community who have died),

All men and women of faith, pray that we may be faithful in how we live out the Gospel.

Be our compass, our light along the way.

Francis of Assisi,

Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux

Ignatius of Loyola, Thomas Merton,

(names of those from your school community who have died),

All women and men of prayer, pray for us.

Be our compass; show us the way of peace.

Sojourner Truth,

Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks

Teresa of Calcutta,

Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day,

Frances Warde, Baptist Russell and Catherine McAuley,

(names of those from your school community who have died),

All women and men of justice, pray for us.

Be our compass; teach us the ways of justice.

Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul II,

(names of those from your school community who have died),

All men and women of peace, pray for us.

All who dwell in the communion of saints, mark a path for us; show us the way.

Communion Song

“Be Not Afraid” by Bob Dufford, SJ *(Gather Comprehensive)*

Compass Distribution

Invite participants forward to receive their compasses. As the compasses are being distributed, have distributors recite the refrain “May the saints of Heaven guide you.”

Adaptation of the “Four Directions” Prayer

(As noted in the following prayer, the congregation will be asked to stand and face different directions, as directed by the prayer leader. It is best to use a compass before the liturgy to figure out north, south, east and west so there won't be any questions or confusion.)

Native Americans, being great people of the earth, have a traditional prayer of creation that we have adapted especially for our liturgy today. I invite you to participate in this prayer by standing and facing North.

For Native Americans and for us today, North symbolizes the intellect, logic, and the reasoning powers of the human being. It is the pursuit of knowledge and the struggle for understanding of what lies beyond us. As we face North we give thanks for fascination, for the pursuit of knowledge. We ask the North to encourage in us a sense of wonder and beauty. As we face North we summons the mystery and strength of this direction to give us guidance in seeking the truth in all things.

(Pause)

I invite you to turn and face South. South symbolizes for us our feelings, relationships and passions — the inner world of emotion. For our relationships and the joys and sorrows we have experienced throughout our lives, we give thanks. As we face this direction we summon the fiery spirit energy of the South and ask for guidance as we struggle for right relationship. Strengthen our resolve to become women and men of peace!

(Pause)

I invite you to face East. East symbolizes the dawn and welcome of the new day. It is the symbol of light, creation and rebirth; it holds the expectation of new beginnings. As we face East we give thanks for the light and the beauty of the dawn. Welcoming the light from the East, we call upon the sun to bring warmth and comfort; and we call upon the light to bring brightness and hope. As we face East, we summon the breath of new life and we call upon the saints to guide us on the journey. May the saints of heaven light the path of truth!

(Pause)

I invite you to face West. West symbolizes the end of our journey, our hopes and dreams, that which we go towards. It is symbolic of those who have gone before us. For our hopes and dreams, those we have shared and those we have kept silent, and for a peaceful end to our journey, we pray. As we face West we summon those who have gone before us and ask for their guidance and strength. May their example and love for us draw us home to God.

(Pause)

I invite you to face the center. As we look inward, let us be mindful that we are women and men of the earth. We are children of creation and people of faith. This morning we invoke the prayers of those East, West, North, South and beyond, that we may find our way home. Mary, mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Saints Peter and Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, Catherine McAuley, and all the Saints — be a light for us on the journey. Lord Jesus, we pray that we may always find our way back to You.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Song

“Go Make a Difference” by Steve Angrisano (*available www.ocp.org*) -or-

“Sound of the Saints” by Kenny Chesney (*available on iTunes*)

Stand and Be Counted Prayer Service

Critical Concerns - Prejudice

Theme

How do my own prejudices affect me?

Materials & Characters

3 identical posterboard squares, 20" X 20" and 3 identical posterboard circles, 20" in diameter which are different colors, (*Cut a circle in the middle of the squares and circles so actors faces can fit through. Attach an elastic band that will secure the board to the actors face.*)

7 student actors (3 squares, 3 circles and Pythagoras)
narrator

Opening Reflection Song

"One Tin Soldier" by Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter (*available on iTunes*)

Reading "The Prayer of St. Francis"

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Gospel Reading Matthew 25:31-41

Skit

Student actors will play the parts of circles and squares. The students should mime the action as it unfolds in the script. There are a few speaking parts, at which time the actors should hold the microphone so they can be heard by the congregation.

The Geometric Village

Narrator: Once upon a time, there was a group of squares who lived in a place called Squaredom. The squared folk lived a relatively peaceful existence, spending their days squaring up, forming right angles, playing “four square,” and confining themselves to the boxes in which they lived their lives. Occasionally, a square or two would whisper and begin rumblings about stepping outside the box, but the squared leader, Pythagoras, would say ...

Pythagoras: Nonsense! Everyone knows that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. This is how we were created. This is how it is meant to be. There is nothing for us beyond Squaredom.

Narrator: And the rumblers would cease their questions for a time and continue to live within the lines. You see, to the squared folk there was no need to step over the line; life seemed so neatly organized — a floor, a ceiling and four walls. Everything followed a particular order, neatly wrapped in a beautifully decorated, perfectly squared box.

Having never ventured beyond the walls of Squaredom, the shapely folk had no idea that there were other shapes who lived just beyond their boundary line.

The circles were not as straight-laced as the folks of Squaredom, and neither did they have right angles to keep them in line. They were a circular people who enjoyed spinning about, circulating among their neighbors, and playing such games as “ring around the rosey.” The circular folk were the restless type because their body shape caused them to be in constant motion, rolling here and there and yonder.

One night the circular teens decided to cruise the circumference of their village and got caught up in a circular rotation that propelled them outside of Circledom, landing them right smack in the middle of Squaredom. On landing in Squaredom, the circles rolled about in hopes of meeting new shapes and different sizes.

Ultimately the circles ran into the shapely teens of Squaredom, and the squares forced the circles into a straight line and boxed them in. The circular teens, innately warm and huggable, reached out in friendship; but the squares, with their sharp edges, would have none of it. So the circles and squares sized each other up.

After spending some time calculating, the squares decided that theirs was a better shape because their sides were easy to measure — with sharp, shapely corners and long, regal sides. Clothes-shopping was a breeze because boxy fashions were in ... and circular shapes were out.

The circles rolled with the punches and rocked with the roll, standing bewildered and confused. One of the circular teens suggested that they circulate and communicate, or perhaps play “ring around the rosey.” But the most rigid of the squares retorted ...

Square: We don’t do circles, we’re squares! We don’t circulate, we speculate!

Narrator: The squares continued their line of attack.

Squares: What happened to your corners? Why don’t you look like we do? You’re unnatural! Your corners must have been cut off! How did your corners get cut off? Did you do something to lose them? You must have done something really bad to lose your corners! And why are you two different colors? Everyone is supposed to be the same color!

Narrator: The circular teens did not appreciate this line of attack, and their anger was set in motion. They were on a roll. Their anger spinning out of control, they side-swiped with ...

Circles: And who would want everyone to be the same color? How boring is that!? Your shape is gross — all those sharp edges! Every time you move, there’s an earthquake! We are sleek and smooth, huggable and soft; and that’s more than we can say for you. You’re stiff, straight-lined, pointy-headed and boxed in at right angles!

Squares: And who said you could come into Squaredom? The lines are clear! You have no right to be here!

Circles: We don’t care about your lines, your boxes or your squares! We’re circles, and we can roll wherever and whenever we please!

Narrator: And so the squares boxed the circles in. And the circles circled the squares. And they pointed and they rolled. They lined up and they circulated. They yelled and they screamed. They accused and countered. They formed picket-lines and started circular lawsuits. They dug straight and circular trenches, to keep the others out. They backed into and rolled over. They encouraged others to hate their enemies. They hit square in the face and laid the other out.

They became an unshapely people, full of anger and hate. Waiting and watching, speculating and calculating. Forgetting that they were all simply geometric shapes.

Stand and Be Counted

Each of the following statements will be read aloud. Invite participants to stand at their places if any of the statements apply to them. After each statement is completed, everyone should sit before the next one is recited.

1. Stand if you consider yourself to be a nonjudgmental person.
2. Stand if you or your parents were born in another country.
3. Stand if you have ever experienced prejudice because of the way you dress.
4. Stand if you have eaten food of another ethnicity in the last three days.
5. Stand if you have felt stereotyped by another person or group.
6. Stand if you come from a family of more than one ethnicity.
7. Stand if you have experienced prejudice because you are a woman.
8. Stand if you have unwittingly offended someone of another ethnicity.
9. Stand if you have ever excluded someone on purpose.
10. Stand if you think people judge teenage girls by their weight.
11. Stand if you have been excluded by others because of your friends.
12. Stand if you have ever been a victim of unfair gossip.

Guided Meditation

As Christians we have heard a lot about the need for reconciliation and peace. The following is a reflection on how prejudice affects all of us — not just the victim, but the one who holds the prejudicial sentiments as well.

How do my own prejudices affect me? How do my prejudices limit me? How do they imprison me?

Feelings of anger, tension and suspicion brought on by prejudice have a negative effect on my body and general sense of well-being.

The stress that tension and suspicion cause, adds to my overall day-to-day concerns, making me a more stressed-out person.

My judgment of others will likely make me wonder if others are making similar judgments about me. This can affect how I feel about myself and also may cause me to be over-zealous about fitting in.

Having a prejudice against others causes me to distance myself from them and leaves me with fewer possibilities for friendship.

Because of the distance I create between myself and another, there are experiences I will never have.

Our connections with others expand our view of the world, so distancing myself from others keeps my world view smaller than it could have been.

Lack of understanding of other cultures and prejudicial comments made by me can cause those I

do like to perceive me in a way I would rather not be perceived. They might see me as ignorant, closed-minded, mean-spirited and hard-hearted. This may in turn cause those I care about to distance themselves from me.

It takes more energy to hate someone than to like them. How could I make better use of my energy if it wasn't being drained by anger and hatred?

The science of physics teaches us that each action has a reaction. It is likely that any negative energy or action I send out toward others will come right back at me.

Limiting myself to those who think, act, look and dress like me does not challenge me or help me grow into a fuller human being.

Song "Chaplet of Divine Mercy" by Matt Maher (*available at www.mattmahermusic.com*)

Reflection Question

How do my own prejudices affect me?

(Invite participants to share their thoughts on the reflection question with a partner.)

Group Sharing

Invite participants to share the fruits of their reflections with the entire group.

Prayers of the Faithful

Invite participants to offer their own spontaneous Prayers of Petition.

Reading

"A Woman's Prayer for Peace" by Riane Eisler, *Prayers for Healing*

When I think of peace, I think of a world where human beings are no longer brutalized on account of such accidents of birth as sex, race, religion, or nationality. For me, peace is a way of structuring human relations where daily acts of kindness and caring are tangibly rewarded. It is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting where our essential interconnection with one another is truly honored.

I pray for a world where we live in partnership rather than domination; where "man's conquest of nature" is recognized as suicidal and sacrilegious; where power is no longer equated with the blade, but with the holy chalice: the ancient symbol of the power to give, nurture, enhance life. And I not only pray, but actively work, for the day when it will be so.

Partner Meditation

Invite participants to choose partners. Each pair chooses one individual to be an "A" and the

other to be a “B.” The partner meditation will be read twice. During the first reading, the A’s close their eyes and the B’s listen and reflect on what is being said. During the second reading, the A’s listen and the B’s close their eyes. During both recitations of this prayer, both A’s and B’s remain silent and stand facing each other.

“A’s” please close your eyes ...

Who is this person you are facing? You might describe them by their name or physical characteristics. But none of these things speaks to the totality of who this person is as a human being.

The person facing you has an inexhaustible store of possibilities and energies that have been only partially awakened. The goodness within this person, and who they were meant to be, struggles daily to be fully realized.

A multitude of memories of the past and many expectations for the future live within this individual. The people who love and have loved them journey with them each day.

The person facing you experiences suffering in their own unique way. They have their own burdens, fears and sorrows. They struggle with things that no one knows about because the hurt is locked up inside. This individual needs to be loved and understood.

This child of God is a miracle and a mystery. There is no one now and will never again be any other exactly like this person. This human being is sacred and a wonderful gift of God’s creation!

(A’s and B’s switch roles; above prayer is read again.)

(After the second recitation of the above prayer, invite participants to hold hands.)

God of all creation, we stand before You today full of struggles and expectations. Because of our own weaknesses, we are not always able to treat others as You would have us treat them. Help us be compassionate with ourselves, so in turn we can be compassionate towards others. Help us appreciate the sacredness of every human being. Help us be respectful of differences; help us be open to all those who cross our paths. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Closing Song “A Rightful Place” by Steve Angrisano,
(available at www.ocp.org)

Care for Creation Liturgy

Critical Concerns - Earth

Theme

In the spirit of *Laudato Si*, this liturgy addresses our concern and care for the earth and honors those who have committed themselves to caring for the earth.

Materials

LCD projector

Laptop

Soundsystem

Well in advance of the liturgy individuals should be chosen to be honored for their commitment to the earth. *(optional)*

Opening Song “Canticle of the Sun” by David Haas (Gather Comprehensive)

First Reading Genesis 2:4-9, 15

Response Creation Video

www.andiesisle.com/magnificent.html

Second Reading Excerpt from Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 84

The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves.

Gospel Luke 20:9-13

Reflection

(Introductory remarks were presented and then four individuals were honored for their efforts towards caring for the earth.)

Prayers of Petition

We pray for every human person who is impacted by environmental pollution. May the human family come together to find new and innovative ways to protect our home Mother earth.

We pray for the poorest and most vulnerable among us who are disproportionately and unjustly harmed by ecological damage.
We pray to the Lord ... Lord hear our prayer.

We pray that our elected officials be blessed with the courage to protect God's good gift of creation.
We pray to the Lord ... Lord hear our prayer. *

We pray that we as a Mercy community can do everything we can to reduce waste, engage in service for the good of the earth and to learn all we can about how to protect God's gift of creation.
We pray to the Lord ... Lord hear our prayer.

**CatholicClimateCovenant.org*

Offertory Song "All Good Gifts" by Stephen Schwartz
(available at www.musicnotes.com)

Communion Song "Here I am Lord" by Dan Shutte (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Communion Meditation "Colors of the Wind" by Judy Kuhn
(available on iTunes)
(Our dance students created a dance to this song.)

Closing Prayer "A Prayer for Our Earth" by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Recessional "Go Make a Difference" by Steve Angrisano
(available at www.ocp.org)

Welcome the Stranger Prayer Service

Critical Concerns - Immigration

Theme

This prayer service explores the plight and suffering of immigrants in search of fullness of life.

Materials

DVD: “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word” (*available on Amazon.com and PrimeVideo*)*
LCD Projector and Laptop
Soundsystem

Opening Song “We Are Many Parts” by Marty Haugen (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Immigration Prayer by Rev. Loren McGrail

Creator God, open our eyes so we can see you in the eyes of our immigrant brothers and sisters, eyes downcast for having lived so long in the shadows, eyes challenging us to join them in the streets or picket lines, eyes lifted looking for the Christ light in us.

Compassionate God, who has come to dwell among us, open our ears to hear the cries of your children, children being separated from their parents, ... led to detention centers, silently giving up dreams.

God of Justice, who crosses all boundaries, give us courage to resist, to say NO to unfair labor practices, to unjust laws. ... Give us the strength to stand with and for your inclusive love, faith to believe, another world is necessary and possible. Let us begin. Amen

DVD Segment “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word”

Scene 14, Segment: 1:05:33-1:12:40 (length: 6:20)

Reading

Pope John Paul II in his Message for World Migration Day 2000: stated “The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness.”

Psalm 61:1-4

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a

strong tower against the foe, I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

Song “I Am Not Alone” by Kari Jobe (*available on iTunes*)

Reflection (*Reflection should be presented by someone who has a personal connection to the experience of immigration.*)

Prayers of Petition

For those fleeing the violence and corruption in their homelands of Mexico or South America, and throughout the world that they may find safety and security as they search for safety in a new land.

Let us pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

For immigrant families searching for life and dignity, that they may find it wherever God leads them as we work together for conversion of hearts and minds.

Let us pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

For the children whose families are broken and separated because of the current deportation system, that God will guide their families to be reunited while we work for reform of the flawed immigration system.

Let us pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

For the children who are US citizens, but live in fear of broken families because of the undocumented status of their parents, that God may bring them Hope as we work toward conversion of hearts and minds.

Let us pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

For the immigrant children who have known only this country and work hard at school, that they may know the value of their work through the support of the DREAM Act,

We pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

That God, who always hears the cry of the oppressed and the immigrant, may enable us to hear those cries and be moved to conversion and transformation, working to reform the immigration laws in this country.

Let us pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer **

(Please stand and bow your head for the blessing)

A Four-Fold Benedictine Blessing by Sr. Ruth Marlene Fox, OSB

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for
justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer
from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may
reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that
you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able,
with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

May the blessing of God the Supreme Majesty and our Creator,
Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our brother and Saviour,
and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide, be with you
and remain with you, this day and forevermore.

Closing Prayer Walk with Us

Journeying God Migrant Christ Border-crossing Spirit You are always making something new in us. You weave together the textures and colors of all cultures, and races. You move in us, calling us to leave everything behind, our homes, families, identities and culture. No wall is too high or too wide to keep us from your table. No laws are so strong as to lock us away from your love. No visa is needed to enter your Kingdom. Walk with us as we find our way to freedom. Stay with us as we confront the barriers that keep us from your good. Breathe new life in us as we live into a new creation, in which we join you at your most holy table, where everyone is welcome. Amen***

Closing Song “Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning” by Andre Thomas
(available on iTunes - *The Ignatian Schola*) -or-

“Land of the Free” Music Video by The Killers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIT0ucf_gys

Resources

**Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*
(available on amazon.com, also available on Prime Video streaming)

******Ignatiansolidarity.net

*******Office for Immigrant Affairs and Immigration Education Archdiocese of Chicago
http://catholicsandimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/PrayersIntentionsComplete_en.pdf

Sisters of Mercy
www.sistersofmercy.org/resources/prayer-just-and-humane-immigration-reform/

United Church of Christ
www.ucc.org/m/worship-ways.html

Additional Prayers for the Critical Concerns

Earth

Iroquois Prayer of Thanksgiving

We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us.
We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water.
We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure to our diseases.
We return thanks to the corn, and to her sisters, the beans and squashes, which give us life.

We return thanks to the bushes and trees, which provide us with fruit.
We return thanks to the wind, which, moving in the air, has banished diseases.
We return thanks to the moon and stars, which have given to us their light when the sun was gone.

We return thanks to the sun, that he has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye.
Lastly we return thanks to God in whom is embodied all goodness, and who directs all things for the good of his children.

Ritual Gesture in Response to the California Fires

Earth, wind, fire and water are the key elements of Creation. Currently one of those elements, fire, has created chaos, devastation, loss and fear. We are using the element of water in this ritual to try to bring the 4 elements back into balance. In the Christian tradition water is an ancient symbol of healing and new life.

The sign of the Cross for us symbolizes the great mystery of the Christian faith that through death and destruction, new life can and will emerge. So in a moment we will ask you to come forward and dip your fingers into water and to bless yourself with the sign of the cross. This is a symbolic gesture of solidarity with those who are suffering. And in a spirit of hope that even from this tragedy, balance, safety and healing can be restored.

(participants come forward and make the sign of the cross with the water)

Peace

Materials

candleabra

matches

Candleabra center candle should be lit prior to service as a symbol of the light of Christ.

Pope Francis at the *World Day of Prayer for Peace* in Assisi described peace in this way. Peace, is a thread of hope that unites earth to heaven, a word so simple and difficult at the same time.

Light Candle

Peace means Forgiveness, the fruit of conversion and prayer, that is born from within God's name, makes it possible to heal old wounds.

Light Candle

Peace means Welcome, openness to dialogue, the overcoming of closed-mindedness, which is not a strategy for safety, but rather a bridge over an empty space.

Light Candle

Peace means Cooperation, a concrete and active exchange with another, who is a gift and not a problem, a brother or sister with whom to build a better world.

Light Candle

Peace denotes Education, a call to learn every day the challenging art of communion, to acquire a culture of encounter, purifying the conscience of every temptation to violence and stubbornness which are contrary to the name of God and human dignity.

Light Candle

Christ Jesus we pray that Mercy High School may be a community of Welcome, Forgiveness, Cooperation, and Human Dignity.

God of all creation bring peace and reconciliation into our broken world. Help us to be instruments of your mercy and peace. Amen

Prayer for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Gracious and merciful God, the problems facing our human family are very grave and we are no longer isolated from one another. We are confronted daily with our addiction to violence, our hatred and our greed. We are heartbroken. The media are relentless in their presentation and critique and we all long for some good news. It is so easy to forget that your Son, Jesus, is always the good news and that he has given us the remedy for our brokenness. “Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” He spoke so clearly. We ask your Holy Spirit to remind us of this again and again. We ask you for the gift of hope in our lives and know that we need to turn to one another for the confidence and assurance that we will emerge from situations, that, in the short term seem hopeless. Banish fear and anxiety from our hearts.

Tonight we gather to affirm one another and to remove the barriers that seem to sour our relationships and keep us at a distance. Heal the short tempers, the crabbiness and the grudges we hold, against one another, against our political system, against our Church, against our financial institutions. We could go on and on. Prompt us to be beacons in the present darkness, and especially beacons to one another. We are all guilty of some selfishness, many of us have lived beyond our means and we become angry and irrational and embrace ideologies that protect our acquisitions. We need your help to stop contributing to the larger greed that tears at our world. We believe in the power of your grace to change our lives and we promise tonight to be once again open to that grace. Bless us with a peaceful spirit and a desire to be reconciled with one another.

Amen.

(www.thomasmorecenter.org/resources/prayers/prayer-for-forgiveness-and-reconciliation/)

Christ the Immigrant

by Fr. Larry Dowling

He longed to cross the boundary between
heaven and earth
Without controversy, without fear,
To offer His Gifts, His Joy,
His challenge, His Sacrifice, His Love.
He came without reservation
To seek a home among the human race.
He came because Heaven sent Him
And earth, through a woman, invited Him.

Yet convention, tradition could have
Prevented His welcome into a family
Were it not for the intervention of
An angel in a dream.
Even while in the womb
He was forced to travel
With mother and father
To a place where the only welcome
Was into a dirty stable where animals fed.

Born in poverty, he again was forced
To flee to another country,
Victim of an oppressive government
Fearful of what He might become,
A perceived threat to those in power.
And other parents suffered and children died
Because of the fear of a Child,
among many children, born of Love.

Reaching adulthood, he traveled as well,
Welcomed by some, rejected by others.
Even his hometown people
Could not accept a migrant preacher
Who preached freedom for all,
Invitation to all, without border or boundary,
To have full citizenship in God's kingdom.

In his travels, He welcomed fellow travelers,
Inviting them to leave their homes

With His companions, He mended many
A broken spirit and body, planting seeds
Of new possibilities, new life in
Soil that seemed dry and barren.

In His travels, He shared many a meal
With those who had lost their way
And, in His waiting on them,
Nourished their bodies
with the fruit of the land
and their souls with the sustenance
of forgiveness and new life,
And a formal invitation to join
In the journey to the Promised Land.

In his travels, He preached the
Gospel of the migrant, the Bedouin,
The one who knows that life is
Nothing but a journey;
The Gospel of blessedness
For those who hunger, mourn,
Offer mercy, seek peace,
approach life humbly, brush off
The pain of rejection for doing what's right.

He is clear about the destination and what
Getting there requires: To provide for any
Migrant who crosses the borders
of our consciousness:
Welcome, Shelter, Clothing, Food,
Drink, Security, Respect,
Companionship, Forgiveness,
Encouragement.

Even in his final hours,
He offered His Body, His Blood
His Sweat, His Tears, for others.
In the end/beginning, He came,
Like all migrants, to a crossroads,
A choice between life for Him and His family,
Or death of the spirit of all He cared about.

And so He chose Life, the travail of
Journeying on behalf of His family,
to an unfamiliar, unwelcoming place,
To offer His gifts, His talents,
His toil, His passion, His heart,
His Spirit, His life, in order to find
a permanent home in our hearts.

Will you allow the Child, The Son, The Man/Christ
to cross the borders
of your fears, doubts, prejudices
to find a place to be born, to grow and mature?
Will you welcome the Mother and Father,
and countless migrant Mothers and Fathers,
who bear His image within them
Seeking to travel the road of Promise?
Will you welcome Him?

If These Walls Could Talk

Closing Prayer Service

Theme

This prayer service explores the events of the school year through a conversation between two “lockers.” We give thanks for what has been and prepare to say goodbye to the graduating seniors.

Materials & Characters

two student actors and two cardboard boxes decorated to look like lockers *(The boxes will be strapped to the front of the actors playing lockers, so straps or long belts will also be needed.)*

Entrance Procession of Graduates

“Gather Us In” by Marty Haugen *(Gather Comprehensive)*

Opening Prayer

Invite a student to prepare an opening prayer.

Skit

“If These Walls Could Talk”

In this skit, the two actors stand facing the congregation. The actors have the cardboard box lockers strapped to the front of their bodies. Note: Some of the lines in this script will need to be adapted to events at your own school.

Lucy: Hey ... Hey, Lily!

Lily: What?

Lucy: Wake up, they’re all gone. They all went down to the closing liturgy.

Lily: Oh.

Lucy: Do you know what today is?

Lily: Thursday.

Lucy: No, not the day of the week, you airhead!

Lily: Oh, you mean it’s “B” day.

Lucy: No, I mean do you realize it’s May and there are only four days of classes left?

Lily: Yeah. So?

Lucy: Yeah, well, in just a few days Liz, Rene and Christina are going to graduate.

Lily: Wow, I didn't realize that! You know, I remember when they were freshmen. On the first day of freshman year, I remember Liz had such a difficult time getting me open. She kept trying and trying, but she just couldn't open the lock. I remember when she finally opened my door. I thought she looked really cute in her nicely pressed uniform.

Lucy: Remember when she stuck her head in and said, "Wow this locker has allot of space."

Lily: Yeah, her voice was so loud it vibrated inside my walls.

Lucy: I didn't think you'd ever stop vibrating! You know, I don't think they realize how attached we get to them. They just think of us as boring old lockers.

Lily: We spend four years getting used to their habits. They yank at our handles, pound on our doors, finally become experts with our locks, throw their books in, slam the doors, and run off to class.

Lucy: In all the hustle and bustle, they don't realize that we have feelings too. You know, it isn't always easy being a locker!

Lily: You know what else?

Lucy: In just a few days they're going to start cleaning out their stuff.

Lily: God, I always hate that day! They drag the garbage can from the other end of the hallway, pour everything out on the floor, and sit there for hours wading through all the papers and junk they've accumulated.

Lucy: Yeah, just wait till Christina starts cleaning me out.

Lily: Wait till she starts going through some of the old papers at the bottom of your floor.

Lucy: Yeah, that will be a walk down memory lane!

Lily: What kind of things are down there anyway?

Lucy: Well, on the first layer is an SAT application. Then there's an assignment sheet from Religion ... an address and phone list from JSA ... a government term paper from [teacher] ... and underneath all that is a Christmas card from her little sister ... an old piece of Halloween candy ... a popped balloon from Mercy Day ... and ... well ...

Lily: What?

Lucy: A program from the memorial mass they had for Mrs. Cooney.

Lily: Wow, it really has been quite a year!

Lucy: You know, I really am going to miss them. I'll miss the Monday morning discussions on what happened over the weekend. I'm going to miss listening in on the details from the latest date and the times they run by laughing and yelling. I'll miss the times they frantically root through us trying to find a novel for English or cellphone. I'm even going to miss the sad days, when they open our doors slowly and just stand and stare inside.

Lily: Yeah, I'll miss all of them too. Funny how, even though the other seniors don't belong to us, we still get to know and like them.

Lucy: Yeah, things just aren't going to be the same around here.

Lily: Who will wake us up in the morning if Elena's voice isn't yelling down the hallway?

Lucy: Well, what about Julia looking for keys to the Xerox room to copy announcements?

Lily: And what about Heather, Trish, Colleen and "Good Morning, Mercy High School"?

Lucy: Things just will not be the same.

Lily: Who will Mrs. Mountain harrass about vocabulary words when they're gone?

Lucy: Yeah. *(Pause)* Hey, Lily. With your luck you'll probably get some real shy, quiet type next year and you'll be bored to tears!

Lily : And you'll probably get some neat freak who cleans you out every Friday!

(Pause)

Lucy: You know what, Lily?

Lily: What?

Lucy: It's a hard life being a locker. Just when you really start to care about them, it's time for them to move on.

Lily: Yeah.

Lucy: Lily?

Lucy: I'm sure glad *you'll* be here next year!

Lily: Me too, Lucy. Me too.

Lucy: Shhh! Here they come!

Lily: I think I'm gonna cry.

Lucy: Shhh! Buck up, Lily! Remember, you're a locker, and you have an important job to do!

Lily: Shhh! Here they come!

Response "Windows and Walls" by Mark Harris (*available on iTunes*)

Reading

"Reflection on a Wednesday Afternoon"

What happens to you Mercy, when the copier cools down,
these students file out,
and the last one has closed her locker and gone home?

What happens to you Mercy, when these voices are silent,
when the laughter has died,
when we are off to errands, shopping, and eventually home?

When the last note on the piano fades,
the lights are turned off, and we close the doors?

What happens to you Mercy, when your halls are empty
and only the memory of us remains in you?

Do you remember our stories?
Do our voices continue to reverberate down your halls?
Or do you stand silent, absorbing it all?

Do you miss us when we're gone?
Do you ponder History, English, Religion ... or (*teachers' and students' last names*)?
Do you look forward to our return?

Or is it true, like so many believe, that you are just paint, flooring, plaster ... that you are completely
unaware?
Unaware of us? But I am not of you.

I miss your doors, your painted walls, your creaks and groans.

Your voices reverberate in my walls.
Your silence is absorbed in me.

For without you, the place in which we gather, we cannot be Mercy.
You are our refuge, the place in which we laugh, love, forgive,
fight, cry, and sometimes dance.

You are a classroom in which we learn about life.
You are a house set on a hill, which is a cornerstone in our lives.
You are desks, tiled floors, dysfunctional clocks, and red-painted doors.
You are a place, a memory, a passion, a dream.

Oh, if your walls could talk, what a story you'd tell!
Oh, if we could only listen, what a wonder it would be!

Gospel Reading

John 15:9-18

Reflections

Invite a graduating senior to reflect on the following questions: "What have you learned while at Mercy?" "What will you take with you as you leave us?" Ask the student to prepare a 5-7 minute reflection. You will be gratified by the results!

Prayers of the Faithful

Lord Jesus, at this our closing liturgy we come before You in thanksgiving for all that has been in this past year. We give thanks for friendships that have deepened, lessons that have been learned, challenges that have been met, and obstacles that have been overcome.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord of compassion, we ask for the blessing of Your Mercy for those in our community who have dealt with significant loss, illness, disappointment, frustration or discouragement.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

We come before You this morning in hope that we all may finish our year with ease. We pray for our graduates who will be leaving us, that wherever they go they may find peace, joy and happiness.
For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

(Invite members of the congregation to add their own intentions.)

Song "What I Did for Love" Edward Kleban (*available on iTunes*)

Passing-On of Symbols

Invite the graduates to choose three or four symbols that represent the wisdom they have gained while at Mercy. Invite a few to explain the symbols and present them to members of the student body or faculty. An example might be: “We, the class of 2019, pass on to you a photo album, to remind you of the friendships and relationships you have made and will continue to nourish. We hope you will remember to honor these friends and recognize their importance in your lives.”

Blessing of Graduates by Homeroom Teachers

At this our closing liturgy, the last time we gather together as a school community, we — your homeroom advisors and teachers — say this prayer for you.

You came to us as girls; you leave us as young women.

You have been a wonderful gift to this community, and we are grateful for your presence among us.

As you leave us, we pray that the God of Mercy will be with you.

May God be with you in all that you do.

May God be present to you in every encounter.

May God’s Mercy follow you all the days of your lives.

We have taught you; we have loved you.

We will certainly remember and miss you.

May the God of Mercy bless you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Graduation Benediction Prayer

May God’s blessing follow you all as you find new journeys to travel. May you walk safely along the pathways of your dreams.

May God’s gentle hand guide the decisions you will make and the passions that you follow.

May your hearts and lives always reflect God’s love and truth,

And may hope be a light within you that you carry into each new day. *

Amen.

**Living Prayers: Contemporary Prayers for Today*

www.living-prayers.com/events/graduation_prayer_blessings.html

Graduate Honor Guard and Recessional

“Forever Young” by Rod Stewart *(available on iTunes)*

To form an honor guard through which the graduates will pass, invite members of the student body and faculty to form two parallel lines facing each other. The lines should begin right behind the graduates’ seats and extend as far as the bodies will take it. While the graduates pass through the line, music can be played in the background. As the graduates pass, encourage students and faculty to clap and extend congratulations and best wishes.

Note: To expedite the formation of the honor guard, draw a diagram and explain it to the teachers before the day of the liturgy. Enlist specific teachers to help during the actual formation, so the process will be organized and occur quickly.

In Celebration and Thanksgiving

Baccalaureate Liturgy

Theme

This liturgy is a celebration and prayer of thanksgiving for all the gifts the students have offered and received during their four years at Mercy High School.

Materials

roses, one per graduate

Procession of Graduates

“Love Theme” from *St. Elmo’s Fire* (available on iTunes)

Welcome

Invite one of the graduates ahead of time to prepare a welcome.

Opening Song

“Lead Me Lord” by John Becker (available at OCP.org)

Opening Prayer

First Reading

Isaiah 43:1-4

Response

“You are Near” by Dan Shutte (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Second Reading by Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself.

And the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Alleluia

Gospel Reading

John 14:1-8

Homily

Invite presider to reflect on the theme of the gospel reading, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

— or —

Reflection

Invite one of the Senior Class Officers to give the reflections at the liturgy. Ask the student to identify three or four values she has learned during her four years at Mercy and what she will take with her as she graduates.

Prayers of the Faithful

Most gracious God, we give thanks for our parents, who have encouraged and supported us during these past four years. May we carry with us their wisdom and love as we move on to college and work.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray in thanksgiving for our teachers, who have dedicated their lives to the education of young people. May our gratefulness sustain and encourage them in the ministry of Mercy education.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

God of Mercy, we pray for the students of Mercy High School, that they take full advantage of all that is offered to them at Mercy. May their lives be enriched by their classmates; may they be challenged by the Mercy vision and values.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray that the Mercy values we have been taught will guide us in our future endeavors and give us courage to reach out to those in need.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, we pray that the members and leadership of our Church continue to seek the truth in all things and respond to the cry of the poor.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for an end to violence and hatred in our world. Lord Jesus, make us instruments of Your peace; give us voices for justice.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord, hear our prayer.

Offertory Song

“I Want to Praise Your Name” by Bob Hurd (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Communion Song

“On Eagles’ Wings” by Michael Joncas (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Alumni Presentation

Invite members of the Alumni Association to present a rose to each graduate. This fits nicely after communion, and the gesture can serve to welcome the graduates into the association.

Song

“Thy Word” by Amy Grant (*available on iTunes*)

Blessing of Seniors

“A Mercy Blessing”

As I stand before you tonight, I am mindful of all those who have participated in the good work of your Mercy education. May the God of Mercy bless the hands that have tended your growth these past four years. May the seeds of Mercy that have been planted within you come to fruition and bear fruit among all God’s people.

As you prepare to leave us, carry with you the legacy of Mercy. Let these words of our foundress, Catherine McAuley, be your guide:

- “Draw persons to God by your words, by your example, and by the works of Mercy.”
- “Let compassion be your animating principal and charity your badge of honor.”
- “Try to meet all with peace and ease and practice great tenderness in all things.”
- “Put your whole confidence in God and, above all things, pray constantly.”
- “May God make you an instrument of glory.”

And until we meet again, may the God of Mercy hold you in the palm of His hand. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Song “Canticle of Turning” by Rory Cooney (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Additional Final Blessings

Baccalaureate Liturgy

A Light to the World

This blessing is meant to symbolize the faculty passing on the light of Mercy to the graduates. Faculty members stand on the altar holding lit candles. The president of the class stands in front of the graduates, facing the altar and holding an unlit candle. The other graduates stand at their places. While the blessing is being read, one faculty member lights the class president's candle.

At the root of our Christian tradition, the symbol of light has been constant. From the beginning of Genesis, when God separated the light from the darkness, to the words of Jesus in John's Gospel, the image of light illuminates our call as Christians.

On this night we, the faculty of Mercy High School, pass on to you, our graduating seniors, the richness of this tradition.

We pass on
the light of wisdom,
the light of compassion,
the light of Christ Jesus.

Our world is filled with much darkness and is sorely in need of God's Mercy. Go out this night into the darkness and bring the light of God's Mercy into the world.
Bring it to the poor.
Bring it to those who are sick and dying.
Give it to the children whom you will bear.
Teach them that God's Mercy shines through the darkness,
a darkness that cannot be overcome.

(Please bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.)

The God of all creation has been with you since the moment of your birth. The light of God's love shines in your eyes; your hearts are full of hope and vision. As you leave us, we pray that the light of God's Mercy will be with you,
in all that you do,
in all whom you encounter,
and with all whom you love.

May the God of Mercy bless you.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We Give Thanks

Principal:

We give thanks to our God every time we think of you.

We are sure of this much — that the One who has begun this good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus. On this night we pray.

Campus Minister:

May you be found rich in the harvest of justice.

May the gifts of courage, strength and compassion make you women and men of peace.

May love abound in your lives, shining forth the fullness of God.

May the gift of Mercy you have received flourish and spill over on all those you meet.

Principal:

May God Bless You.

May God Keep You.

Until we meet again, may your lives show forth the love and Mercy of our God.

Celebrant:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Installation Ceremony New Principal

Theme: Welcoming a new administrator.

Materials:

Program with missioning script

3 candles (one Mercy candle, two taper candles)

matches

Opening Song: “Circle of Mercy” by Jeanette Goglia RSM

(available at www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/)

Welcome: Board Chair

Scripture Reading: Micah 6:6-8

What Does God Require of Us?

“With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

God has told you, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you ...
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Suscipe Prayer:

My God, I am yours for time and eternity.
Teach me to cast myself entirely
into the arms of your loving providence
with a lively, unlimited confidence in your

compassionate, tender pity.
Grant, O most merciful Redeemer,
that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me.

Take from my heart all painful anxiety; let nothing
sadden me but sin, nothing delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of You my
God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom.

Amen.

(MESA Representative invites new principal forward)

Missioning of New Principal

MESA Representative: [New Principal] you have been called to take up the challenge
of leading [school] as Principal. In the work you are about to undertake you walk in the
footsteps of many dedicated women and men who have contributed to the good work of
educating young women at Mercy. Tonight, as a Mercy community, we Mission you as the
Principal and ask you to affirm your commitment through the following questions:

MESA Representative: [New Principal] will you work to the best of your ability to integrate
the educational vision of the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic identity of [school] within
curricular and co-curricular programs?

[New Principal]: I will.

MESA Representative: Will you strive to deepen the faith community and faith formation of
Mercy's staff, students, families and alumnae?

[New Principal]: I will.

MESA Representative: Will you partner with faculty, staff, students and parents to continue
to strive for academic excellence so that all students can reach their full potential?

[New Principal]: I will.

MESA Representative: Will you seek new and innovative ways to further the Mercy Mission
of compassion and service with a special emphasis on the Critical Concerns? Will you model
our Mission of mercy and compassion in both word and deed?

[New Principal]: I will.

MESA Representative: Will you partner with the members of the Board of Directors to ensure that Mercy remains a viable and vibrant educational institution?

[New Principal]: I will.

MESA Representative: [New Principal], will you please take a moment and pray for God's guidance.

Principal Prayer: [New Principal]

Merciful God,

Enable me to lead with wisdom, and guide our faculty and staff to educate women of compassion and mercy. Equip me to lead with truth, and assist in the faith and conscience formation of our students. Enliven me to lead with vision, as Mercy embarks on a vibrant future. Empower me to lead with love, as this community serves those in need. Elevate me to lead with courage, and keep me ever mindful of the communion of Mercy saints standing ever at my side. Through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

(please stand)

Community Blessing

[New Principal], As you begin your work as Principal of [school], we ask God to Bless you. May the work you are about to undertake be blessed with grace and be a reflection of the Mercy of our God.

We ask this through Christ our Lord and Our Lady of Mercy, AMEN

Passing of the Mercy Flame

[Former Principal] to [New Principal]

[Formal Principal]: With this flame I pass onto you our Mercy heritage, rich traditions, vibrant community, and dynamic future. May the spirit of Mercy grow within you each day. AMEN

Mercy Leadership Welcome

(MESA Representative shares some reflections)

Closing Song: "Canticle of Turning" by Rory Cooney *(Gather Comprehensive)*

Honoring Those We Have Lost

Memorial Service Excerpts

During my years at Mercy High School in Burlingame, California, we lost six beloved faculty and staff members. From those experiences of loss, I learned many things about a community's need to honor the life of the lost loved one, celebrate our connection with the deceased, and express our grief both individually and communally. The following excerpts from various memorial services serve as examples of methods that can be used to help our communities during a time of loss.

Honoring What They Have Been for Us

It is so important for us, during a time of loss, to honor what we have received from the lost loved one and to express our gratitude. Writing a personal letter to the deceased can be a very touching means of expression. Using the letter format can help us articulate what still needs to be said to the deceased.

The following is an excerpt from the Vigil for Sister Mary Consolata Nelson, RSM, teacher at Mercy High School for 26 years.

Sunday, June 28, morning of the vigil

Dear Consie,

I woke this morning to a foggy, overcast day in Moss Beach. No doubt it is overcast today wherever your friends reside.

It is quiet now. The phone has stopped ringing.

The songs have been chosen, the potato salad is safe in the fridge, the programs are folded, and the kids are set for the honor guard. Everything is prepared.

Now it is quiet; it is silent, and I feel empty.

Yet soon the emptiness will be filled. Stories, laughter, tears, trembling ... when, one by one, they'll give voice; they'll step forward. To remember, to sing, to pray, to celebrate you.

How fitting, one by one,
For that is how I'll remember you!
Loving God's people, one person at a time.
Writers call it intimate Christianity;
I call it "Consie Spirituality" —
Loving us, one person at a time.

Sister, teacher, colleague, historian, photographer,
Warmth, laughter, sports fan, friend.

Take your leave from us, wrapped in Mercy,
Remaining a gentle memory that comforts.

Give our love to Gabe, Mary Cooney and Connie;
Tell them we still remember.

Tell Catherine McAuley
The mission we will never forget.

Good-bye, dear Consie.
We have been your colleagues and your friends.
We have loved you.
We certainly will miss you!

Reflecting the Individual

Our goodbyes need to reflect the personality and lives of those we have lost. Vigils, funerals and memorial services need to be tailored to the unique individual. These services need to be a reflection of the real life of the one lost. To adequately memorialize an individual, their life, their loves and their personality must all be part of the service, lest we walk away feeling that more should have been said.

The following is an excerpt from a memorial service prepared for Connie Schrager, Resource Center Specialist at Mercy High School. Connie was Jewish. She also had a great interest in the Native American people.

Adaptation of the “Four Directions Prayer”

Make sure you know ahead of time where north, south, east and west are in relation to the room you are in!

Native Americans, being great people of the earth, have a traditional prayer of creation that we have adapted especially for our prayer service today. I invite your participation in this prayer by asking you to stand and face East.

For the Native Americans and for us today, East symbolizes the dawn and welcome of the new day. It is the symbol of light, creation and rebirth; it holds the expectation of new beginnings. As we face East we give thanks for the light, the dawn that Connie was for us. We give thanks that as a mother Connie gave birth to four children and later had three grandchildren. Welcoming the light from the East, we call upon the sun to bring warmth and comfort to Connie’s children — Michael, Chris, Carol and Stephen — and we call upon the light to bring hope to her grandchildren — Daniel, Lisa and Sherry.

I invite you to face North. North symbolizes the intellect, logic, and the reasoning powers of the human person. It is the pursuit of knowledge and the struggle to understand what lies beyond us. As we face North we give thanks for Connie's own fascination for, and pursuit of, knowledge and the things beyond. We especially remember her interest in history, politics and trivia and her love of discussion and debate. We are thankful for her work in passing on that love of knowledge to our students during her years of service to Mercy High School.

I invite you to turn and face South. South symbolizes our feelings, relationships and passions — the inner world of emotion. Facing South, recollections of a wonderful sense of humor, laughter and friendship are our memories of Connie today. For our love of Connie, and the friendship she shared with us and those beyond Mercy High School, we give thanks. For the joys and sorrows that Connie experienced throughout her life, we pause in quiet comfort.

I invite you to face West. West symbolizes the end of our journey, our hopes and dreams, that which we move towards. It is symbolic of those who have gone before us, those who have gone before Connie — her friends and relatives, parents and grandparents, Sr. Mary Gabriel, and all those who Connie loved in her life. For all her hopes and dreams — both those she shared with us and those she kept silent — we give thanks. For a peace-filled end to her journey, we pray.

I invite you to face the center. As we look inward, let us be mindful that we, like Connie, are women and men of the earth. Women and men of creation and hope, intellect and knowledge, passion and feeling, hopes and dreams. Today we invoke the prayers of those East, West, North, South — and beyond.

Oh Great Spirit, Mother Earth, Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Sarah, Lord of all creation, open Yourself to receive our friend Connie and hold her tenderly until we meet again. Amen.

Acknowledging Our Own Losses

Memorials should also articulate, *out loud*, our specific losses in losing the individual. We must further articulate *out loud* the unique contributions of the deceased. Finally, we need to express the emptiness felt at the loss of the loved one.

The following excerpt is taken from a simple dedication in our school library for Mary Cooney, the librarian at Mercy High School for twelve years.

What will and can they remember
When this room has gone silent,
When gentleness and a kind word dissipate,
When these resident authors grieve,

When check-in and check-out are forgotten,
When life has been catalogued and set numerically in place,
When a dear friend walks on a distant road
In pursuit of new and glorious dreams?

I hoped that they would remember me with affection.
But through grace they remembered my dreams,
Those distant images, those calculated longings,
Those four o'clock musings.

They heard those distant whispers
That tie their world to mine.

In love,
Through grace,
They remember
My desire,
My vision,
My dreams of Mercy,
Which forever live in this place.

Creating a Sacred Space for Grief

Communities in grief need sacred spaces where it is safe to grieve, both individually and communally. Creating a “memorial board” for the lost loved one gives community members a vehicle through which to express their individual memories. Memorial boards reassure community members that they are not alone in their grief. They also provide a central location where people can be encouraged to share both memories and tears.

A memorial board can be created simply by hanging up a large piece of art paper with some remembrance of the deceased, such as a picture or familiar symbol. Community members are then invited to write on the board simple messages to, or memories of, the deceased. The memorial board should be left in place for at least three weeks in order to allow everyone ample time to compose or write their messages.

In Thanksgiving

Memorial Mass for Teacher Carol Galletta

Welcome (*Principal or President welcomes those gathered*)

Opening Song “On Eagles Wings” by Michael Joncas (*Gather Comprehensive*)

First Reading

Proverbs 31:10-31

“A Worthy Woman”

When one finds a worthy woman,
her value is far beyond pearls.
Her husband, entrusting his heart to her,
has an unfailing prize.
She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

Like merchant ships, she secures her provisions from afar.
She rises while it is still night, and distributes food to her
household. She picks out a field to purchase; out of her earnings
she plants a vineyard.

She is gird about with strength, and sturdy are her arms.
She enjoys the success of her dealings; at night her lamp is
undimmed. She reaches out her hand to the poor, and extends
her arm to the needy. She fears not the snow, for in her household
all her children are doubly clothed.

She makes her own coverlets; fine linen and purple are her
clothing. She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs
at the days to come.
She is gentle in spirit, and on her tongue is kindly counsel.

She studies by night and by day, and she speaks with great wisdom. Her children rise up and praise her; her husband extols her too.

Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all. Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who loves the Lord is praised. Give her a reward for her labors, and let her be praised at the city gates.

Response “Ave Maria” by Jordan Smith (*Mercy Dancers created a dance*)
(available on itunes)

Second Reading Thessalonians 4:13-18

Alleluia

Gospel Luke 1:46-55

Homily

Prayers of Petition

Lord Jesus, as we gather as a community of faith, we pray for the Galletta family Joe, Nick and Gianna as they come to terms with the loss of their beloved mother and wife. We also pray for the Tonelli family. May the love of friends and family bring them peace during this time of loss. For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

God of merciful love, we pray for all those who are suffering with breast cancer. May they be given the best possible medical treatment available and may they be surrounded by a loving community of support. Help those who continue to battle with breast cancer be grounded in your strength and peace. For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

Jesus the teacher. Through her hard work and dedication Carol inspired many young people towards a love of learning and academic success. We pray for all Carol's former students that they may continue to be motivated, work hard and use their gifts to help others. May the influence of Carol's vision of Mercy education live on in all the classrooms at Mercy High School. We pray for the needs and petitions of the entire Mercy community. For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

During this Season of Saints and Thanksgiving, help us to be mindful of those who have less than we do. Let us continue in the spirit of Catherine McAuley and continue to reach out to others in need.

For this we pray to the Lord ... Lord Hear Our Prayer

Offertory Mercy AMES Students and Alumnae

Offertory Song “Seasons of Love” by Jonathan Larson
(available on iTunes)

Communion Song “I Am the Bread of Life” by Suzanne Toolan, RSM (*Gather Comprehensive*)

Post Communion Song “You Will be Found “ by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul
(available on iTunes)

Even when the dark comes crashing through
When you need a friend to carry you
And when you’re broken on the ground
You will be found

So let the sun come streaming in
‘Cause you’ll reach up and you’ll rise again
Lift your head and look around
You will be found
You will be found
You will be found
You will be found
You will be found

Remembering Carol Galletta (*a Mercy student and Carol’s daughter spoke*)

Closing Song “Rise Up” by Andra Day
(available on iTunes)

Creative Ideas for Liturgies

- Breaking Open the Word
- Dance, Music, Song



Breaking Open the Word

The term “Breaking Open the Word” refers to techniques that can be used in the presentation of scripture readings. The following are examples of the types of techniques that can be employed to breathe life into the presentation of scripture stories.

Stories Brought to Life

To deepen the congregation’s participation in a scripture reading, have members (*while remaining in their seats*) act out different parts of the story. For example, for a reading of the story of the Storm at Sea (Luke 8:22-26), the faculty could play the sea, seniors could play the storm, freshmen could play the calm and stillness invoked by Jesus, sophomores could play the boat that is tossed around, and juniors could play the terrified disciples.

As the story is narrated, the groups respond as the different elements of the story unfold. This does not have to be an elaborate production. Just allow the congregation to have a little fun! It should be noted that one or two run-throughs before the liturgy begins will enhance participation and also gives time for any needed suggestions by the liturgist.

Tableaux Vivante

Tableaux Vivante is a French drama technique. In a nutshell, the actors tell a story in a silent, freeze-frame, “human-slideshow” format.

The process begins with the actors reading through a scripture passage several times, searching for the six different movements in the story. Once the movements have been identified, the actors then create a silent, “frozen” scene to illustrate each movement of the story.

When the reading is first presented, the scripture is read in full without the scene presentations. This initial reading helps the congregation make connections with the story they are about *to see but not hear*.

During the next segment the *tableaux* — or scenes — are presented in silence; the scripture story is not read. The *tableaux* are then presented as follows: members of the congregation are asked to close their eyes, which can be indicated by the leader saying “curtains down.” When everyone’s eyes are closed, the actors set up the first scene. When completed, the congregation members are then directed to open their eyes with the words “curtains up.” The congregation is given time to view the scene and then is told again “curtains down.” The actors then set up their next scene. This process continues until all of the scenes have been presented.

Living Statues

The “living statues” technique helps visually illustrate a scripture passage as it is being presented. The first step in this process is for the actors to read through the passage and find four or five moments that can be illustrated through physical postures. Once the moments have been chosen, the narrator underlines those words or phrases so they can be repeated, and responded to by the actors, during the reading.

During the liturgy, the actors take their places in the worship space and wait for the pre-selected moments in the passage to be read. To cue the actors, the narrator repeats the underlined phrases. The actors respond in kind by moving into the predetermined posture. As the story unfolds, the actors adjust their postures as the narration indicates.

Take for example the Visitation of Mary by the Angel Gabriel. In this story, Mary experiences a wide range of emotions, from fear to acceptance. The story also provides rich visual imagery, which can be missed in a strictly oral reading. For an example of this technique, see the Visitation of Mary reading in the “Angels We Have Heard on High” Christmas Liturgy in the *Celebrating* section.

Tell the Story from a Different Perspective

What is sometimes lacking in scripture stories is the inner thoughts, feelings or words of particular characters. Giving these individuals a voice will help us see scriptural characters as living, feeling people, making them more available to us. For an example of this technique, see the “God-Noah dialogue” in the “Life on the Ark” Reconciliation Service, in the *Celebrating* section.

Interactive Stories

One of the reasons the recitation of readings can sometimes be dull is that the reader is engaging only our ability to *listen*. When the congregation is asked to *interact* with the story, they are challenged to fully listen, think about what is happening, and respond. To make stories more interactive, break them up into segments and give the members of the congregation different parts. For an example of this technique, see “The Story of Catherine McAuley” in the *Mercy Day Skits* section. For another example, see “A Time for Mercy” in the *Mercy Poetry* section.

Rewrite the Story

One way to add a new dimension to a familiar scripture passage is to rewrite the story in modern terms and contexts. This technique can often be both humorous and illustrative of gospel values at work in the present day. In rewriting scripture stories, one should be careful to be faithful to the story line and the underlying meaning, moral or values of the story. For an example of this technique, see “The Good Samaritan” in the *Mercy Day Skits* section.

Create Your Own Reading

As Mercy communities, we are called upon again and again to revisit our definition — and our understanding — of Mercy. As members of the Mercy tradition, many of us hold in our hearts our own definition of what it means to “be Mercy.” As a way of encouraging students to express what they believe Mercy means, have the students write out their own definitions and weave them together to become your school’s definition of Mercy. For an example of this technique, see “A Woman of Mercy” in the *Mercy Day Additional Readings* section.

Bring the Lives of the Students into the Story

A good liturgist frequently asks herself, “How can I make this reading more meaningful for the congregation? How can I make this story more engaging?” One way of making a story more meaningful is to relate it somehow to the personal experiences of the members of the congregation.

I once struggled with these questions during planning for an Advent liturgy. I wanted the students to understand what it felt like for Mary to learn that she was pregnant and to carry and give birth to Jesus. I also wanted them to understand more fully a mother’s relationship with her child. What resulted was an exploration of the relationship between a couple of mother-daughter pairs from our school community. The result of this exploration can be found in the “What Child is This?” Christmas Liturgy in the *Celebrating* section.

Give a Human Voice to Values or Inanimate Objects

Another effective technique is to write narrations that give voice to values or inanimate objects. This technique allows us to look at our environment in a new way and helps us illustrate our values more clearly. For an example of this technique, see the “If These Walls Could Talk” Prayer Service in the *Remembering* section.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a dramatic technique in which actors pick a particular theme or story line and let it unfold through their own creativity rather than by using a script. This technique can be helpful to the liturgist, who tries to flesh out the feelings or thoughts of a scriptural character, or in the rewriting of a familiar scripture story.

Improvisation is best used as a creative process, or rehearsal tool, or for scene-writing. It can be used to create short vignettes for liturgy. Before presenting such vignettes, the actors should be fully prepared with a well thought-out story line. Please be aware that when inexperienced actors try to improvise in front of an audience and are not fully prepared, the performance can get out of hand.

Dance

Dance is deeply rooted in the Mercy tradition. Catherine McAuley was very fond of dancing and enjoyed it throughout her life. Encouraging her Sisters to partake as well, she scrawled across the top of one of her letters, “Dance every evening!”

Dance can add a great deal to liturgy and often expresses things we cannot touch with words. Dance can be the prayer of one’s whole being — or that of an entire community. A good dancer accompanied by the right music can evoke joy, sorrow, elation, melancholy, and a whole host of other feelings, all of which enhance our worship.

Some students love to create dances and can use this talent to enrich our liturgies. Invite a few dance students to create a dance to accompany one of the songs listed in the “Musical Suggestions for Creating Dances” section below, and see how they are inspired!

Following are two examples of the kind of dances that can be created for liturgies. The first is a choreographed dance for “Reel Around the Sun.” The second, entitled “We Dance,” is a litany created for Advent/Christmas liturgies.

“Reel Around the Sun” by Bill Whelan *(available on iTunes)*

Choreography

This dance was choreographed to the instrumental piece “Reel Around the Sun” from Riverdance. The piece was broken up into specific timed segments so that different cultural dances would fit the music. The segments were set and performed as follows:

<i>Time segment</i> (minutes)	<i>Dance</i>
0:00 - 2:50	Modern
2:50 - 3:45	Tap
3:45 - 4:40	Filipino Tinikli — or — Spanish Flamenco
4:40 - 5:10	<i>Student with candle dances forward and raises it as music climaxes.</i>
5:10 - 7:02	Irish Step <i>(A strong Irish Step dancer is needed here!)</i> <i>Performer dances in from the back of the worship space to the center.</i>

(Different cultural dances can be substituted for those listed.)

Each dancer moves in and out of the central dance area as her time begins and elapses. The director watches the time and indicates to each dancer when it is her turn to begin.

When given their music pieces, dancers can create their own specific dance segments. For the transitions to be smooth, and for the dancers to get a feel for the piece as a whole, some rehearsal is required. For best results, dancers should perform on a raised platform.

We Dance

Litany (Advent/Christmas)

Dance can also enrich our litanies and readings as illustrated in the following litany. In this piece the reader and dancers alternate as in a prayer-response format. This piece is also presented with different cultural dances, as noted below. The reader can be accompanied by soft piano music, and the dancers can be accompanied by recorded pieces from each culture.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. And so we have seen that light in the birth of our Lord Jesus. The earth will rejoice in the coming of the wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace. We do not rejoice alone; nation joins with nation to welcome the One who brings light into the world of darkness. The nations of the world rejoice and give praise; may all people rise and dance before the living God.

Pause for dancers (Modern)

And so we dance because all people join us in celebrating the coming of the Christ Child. Whether in English, Spanish, Chinese, Swahili or Tagalog, we join with our brothers and sisters all over the world in thanksgiving for our differences and praise for our uniqueness. Each in her own way celebrates the bright light of Jesus that has come into the world. The nations of the world rejoice and give praise; may all people rise and dance before the living God.

Pause for dancers (Hawaiian)

We dance because we are joyful; we dance because it is time to celebrate. The shepherds have come in from the fields, and the kings have traveled from faraway lands, to welcome the Christ Child into a hungry world. We dance because we are joyful; we dance because God has come into the world to live among us. The nations of the world rejoice and give praise; may all people rise and dance before the living God.

Pause for dancers (Spanish)

We dance because a young woman said yes to motherhood, because we are all God's children. Black and white, brown or Irish green, we are all one in God's sight. The nations of the world rejoice and give praise; may all people rise and dance before the living God.

Pause for dancers (Irish)

We dance because we are Mercy; we dance because we are different; we dance simply because we *are*. Let us give thanks for the One who has come to bring light into our darkness, and pray that we too might be a light to all people. Amen.

Musical Suggestions for Creating Dances

“The Circle of Life” by Carmen Twillie, *(available on iTunes)*

use: Critical Concerns - Earth

“Reel Around the Sun” by Bill Whelan, *(available on iTunes)*

use: Mercy Day

“Kahaku E” (Oh Lord, Have Mercy) by Joe Camacho, *Spirit of Malia* (GIA Publications)

use: Mercy Day

“On Earth as it is in Heaven” by Ennio Morricone, *(available on iTunes)*

use: birth and resurrection themes, Lent, Good Friday

“The Prayer” by Celine Dion, *(available on iTunes)*

use: Mercy Day, Closing and Baccalaureate Liturgies

“Sound of the Saints” by Audio Adrenaline, *(available on iTunes)*

use: All Saints Day

“Do You Hear What I Hear?” by Johnny Mathis, *(available on iTunes)*

use: Advent/Christmas

“Ave Maria” by Aaron Neville, *(available on iTunes)*

use: Mercy Day, Advent, Christmas, Memorial Service

“Fall on Me” by Andrea Bocelli, Matteo Bocelli, *(available on iTunes)*

use: reconciliation, Lent

“Glory to God” by Marty Haugen, *Agape* (GIA Publications)

use: anytime

“Halle, Halle, Halle” by Marty Haugen, *Agape* (GIA Publications)

use: anytime

“The Lord’s Prayer,” *Sarafina*, *(available on iTunes)*

use: anytime

“We are the Body of Christ” by Dana, *We Are the Body of Christ*, *(available on iTunes)*

use: anytime

Music Resources

Unless noted, all liturgical music suggestions from the *Gather Comprehensive* can be obtained from:

GIA Publications

www.giamusic.com

Spirit and Song Liturgical Music

www.ocp.org

The Circle of Mercy: Songs of the Sisters of Mercy

www.mercyworld.org/library/the-circle-of-mercy-cd214/

Sheet Music

www.musicnotes.com

www.sheetmusicplus.com

Lyrics

www.lyrics.com

Contemporary Music

The following programs can help you keep in touch with the latest music and integrate popular songs in worship with teens:

- “Top Music Countdown”
- “Scripture Themes and Popular Music”

Cornerstone also offers speakers for student retreats, popular music reflection, faculty and parent workshops, etc.

These programs can be ordered from:

Cornerstone Media Incorporated

www.cornerstonemedia.org

Song

The following songs combine Mercy lyrics with familiar tunes from the African American Spiritual musical tradition. Enlist the help of students to lead the student body in a round or two of these songs. You will be surprised at the results!

Baptist/Frances Rode the Boat Ashore

This song is to be sung to the tune of “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore.” Choose “Baptist” or “Frances” according to your region.

Baptist (Frances) rode the boat ashore,
Hallelujah.
Baptist (Frances) rode the boat ashore,
Hallelujah.

The Sisters prayed as they sailed,
Hallelujah.
The Sisters’ spirits never failed,
Hallelujah.

The ocean was deep and the ocean was wide,
Hallelujah.
A new mission on the other side,
Hallelujah.

Baptist (Frances), we remember you,
Hallelujah.
Baptist (Frances), we remember you,
Hallelujah.

Mercy, remember your history,
Hallelujah.
That which sets our hearts free,
Hallelujah.

Rock My Soul

This song is to be sung to the tune of “Rock My Soul.”

Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Oh, Rock-a my soul

So high I can’t get over it
So low I can’t get under it
So wide I can’t get around it
Oh, Rock-a my soul

Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Oh, Rock-a my soul

Rock my soul
Rock my soul
Rock my soul
Oh, Rock-a my soul

Rock my soul, I can’t get over it
Rock my soul, I can’t get under it
Rock my soul, I can’t get around it
Oh, Rock-a my soul

Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Rock my soul in the bossom of Mer-cy
Oh, Rock-a my soul

Kumbaya

This song is to be sung to the tune of “Kumbaya.”

(Note: “Kumbaya,” also known as “Kum Ba Yah,” was adapted from a traditional African American Spiritual song. The title is probably dialect for “Come by Here.” Source: *Popular Music*, 1920-1979. Detroit: Gale.)

Kumbaya, my Lord, Come by here
Kumbaya, my Lord, Come by here
Kumbaya, my Lord, Come by here
Oh Lord, Come by here

Mercy’s singing, Lord, Kumbaya
Mercy’s singing, Lord, Kumbaya
Mercy’s singing, Lord, Kumbaya
Oh Lord, Kumbaya

Hear us praying, Lord, Kumbaya
Hear us praying, Lord, Kumbaya
Hear us praying, Lord, Kumbaya
Oh Lord, Kumbaya

Seeking justice, Lord, Seeking peace
Seeking justice, Lord, Seeking peace
Seeking justice, Lord, Seeking peace
Oh Lord, seeking peace

We give praise, Oh Lord, Kumbaya
We give praise, Oh Lord, Kumbaya
Grant Your blessing, Lord, grant Your peace
Oh Lord, grant Your peace

Resources

- Liturgical Planning
- Mercy Resources
- Videos
- Bibliography



Liturgical Planning

Liturgies for Young People

From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc., 1997

www.nfcym.org

Directory for Masses with Children

Liturgical Document on the Liturgy, 1973

This document can be found in the liturgical *Sacramentary*.

For additional documents and information about liturgies for young people, see:

www.catholicliturgy.com

Seasonal Liturgies

The Sourcebook Series

Recommended titles: *Advent, Lent, Reconciliation, Eucharist*

(available at Amazon.com)

Memorial Services/Funerals/Grieving

Through Death to Life: Preparing to Celebrate the Funeral Mass

Rev. Joseph M. Champlin

(available at Amazon.com)

The Bereavement Ministry Program: A Comprehensive Guide for Churches

Jan Nelson and David Aaker

(available on Amazon.com)

Scripture Searches

www.biblegateway.com

Art Resources

www.JenNortonArtStudio.com

(Catherine McAuley and Saints)

Mercy Mission and Catherine McAuley

Books

Praying with Catherine McAuley,
Helen Marie Burns, RSM, and Sheila Carney, RSM
St. Mary's Press, 1996 (*check Mercy bookshelves*)

Tender Courage: A Reflection on the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley, First Sister of Mercy,
Joanna M. Regan, RSM, and Isabelle Keiss, RSM
Franciscan Herald Press, 1988 (*check Mercy bookshelves, available on Amazon.com*)

Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley: A Collection of Prayers,
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Liturgical Training Publications, 1999 (*available on Amazon.com*)

The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley, Mary C. Sullivan, RSM.
The Catholic University of America Press, 2012 (*available on Amazon.com*)

Websites

www.mercyedu.org (Mercy Education System of the Americas)

www.mercyworld.org (Mercy International Association)

www.sistersofmercy.org (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas)

www.sistersofmercy.org/what-we-do/social-justice-advocacy/ (Justice)

www.sistersofmercy.org/files/documents/resources/Justice/CriticalConcerns-1Pger-FINAL.pdf
(Critical Concerns)

Facebook

www.facebook.com/MercySisters

www.facebook.com/mercyeducationsystem/

Videos

In God Alone: The Story of Catherine McAuley

www.mercyworld.org

Mercy Center (Mercy Mission)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeNO8sDKzv4>

Mercy Housing (Mercy Mission)

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/44687340?title=0&byline=0&portrait=0>

2017 Opus Prize Finalist: Sister Marilyn Lacey, RSM (Mercy Mission)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV-6wOtFB5w>

Meet Sister Mary Scullion (Mercy Mission)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1NdaZFyH0>

Top 10 Things You Need to Know about Pope Francis' Laudato Si' (Critical Concerns)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4

Creation (Critical Concerns)

<http://www.andiesisle.com/magnificent.html>

All Creation Worships You - Tony Metendez (In Praise of God the Creator)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyVEIUb_bRU

Immigration (Critical Concerns)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIT0ucf_gys

For More Videos Addressing the Critical Concerns

<http://mercyedu.org/programs/educational-resources/>

(see Critical Concerns Curriculum Guides, video links embedded)

Catholicism (The Gift of Our Faith)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_E6Lw09z2Y

Jean Vanier: How to Lose Power (Christian Community)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raKH76eweYU>

An Easy Way to Do a Daily Examen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUcoHAqOFRs>

Gratitude by Louie Schwartzberg | TEDxSF (Gratitude)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ&sns=em>

From Pro Soccer to the Priesthood: Fr. Chase Hilgenbrinck (God's Call)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR9AvbO6a6g&index=2&list=PLn-atSTea_pDEWJuGZ8N1MLJMZCmPDjJA

Advent: Bishop Robert Barron (Advent Waiting)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAWnDA5cWD8>

Advent: More than a Chocolate Calendar Fr. Mike Schmitz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SA-gx-PWB0A>

Lent: Fr. Mike Schmitz (Preparing for Lent)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qDG51cl9gY&t=172s

Lent: Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT (Christ Who Heals - Lent)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gc41cn9eLA>

How to Forgive (Reconciliation)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-K5btaxEFY>

Lent: Iyanla Vanzant: Check Your Vision (Reconciliation)

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gLZi9aesxqw>

Prodigal Son

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_OCO5i7NKs

Little Boy in the Cold (Good Samaritan)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/19/norwegians-boy-without-jacket_n_4815716.html?utm_hp_ref=tw

The Passion through Mary's Eyes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvIEDqNCH74>

The Invisible Woman (God Appreciates Our Efforts)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YU0aNAHXP0>

Fall on Me (Love Between Parent and Child)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChcR2gKt5WM>

Third Day Music Video (The Creed)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3i-VWxOAc>

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Hammaraskjold, Dag. *Markings*. Trans., Leif Sjoborg and W.H. Auden. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

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Kozak, Pat, and Janet Schaffran. *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities*. New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994.

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Prayers for Our Catholic Family, 2014, Our Sunday Visitor.

Oman, Maggie. *Prayers for Healing*. California: Conari Press, 1977.

Regan, M. Joanna, RSM, and Isabelle Keiss, RSM. *Tender Courage: A Reflection on the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley, First Sister of Mercy*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988.

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley: A Collection of Prayers*. Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1999.

Sullivan, Mary C., RSM. *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy*. The Catholic University of America Press, 2012

Weber, Christin Lore. *Blessings: A Woman's Reflection on the Beatitudes*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

Wiederkehr, Macrina. *Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers and Reflections*. New Jersey, Silver Burdett Ginn, 1991.

Sister of Mercy

*She eludes us,
That sacred Sister*

*Bathed in light, beauty's pure face
Strewn about with kindness,
A reflection of Christ's own grace*

*Wrapped within that woman of Dublin,
Serenading her with song,
Warming her soul quiet,
from ancient calling psalms*

*To the streets did that Dubliner go
She did seek, so long to find,
that sweet alluring whisper,
pining for rhythm, longing for rhyme*

*As Sister Mercy retreated,
Catherine did pursue
that tender echoing music
so long a morning due*

*"I am yours for time and eternity"
Catherine's song so far took wing*

*Mercy Sister pursues us
Seeking tirelessly,
that longed for spring*

*Thy soul, thy love is Mercy
If thou only let it sing,
Sister Mercy calling
It is He, she so longs to bring*

**"I am still running,
trying to capture
that by which
I have been captured"**

-Philippians 3:12