



MERCY
INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

Today, Sisters of Mercy, through Mercy International Association, use their resources to respond to issues of global poverty demonstrated in the massive displacement of persons worldwide.

Prayer- a Vitally Important Ministry in the Life of our Mercy Family Today

In preparing for compliance with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation, Europe, May 25th 2018) one thing has become more and more evident and that is how prayer is very obviously a vitally important ministry in the life of our Mercy family today.

Action and contemplation is woven into the essence of who we are as women and men of Mercy. It always has been a very important part of Catherine's legacy and central to how she believed the Great Commandment should be lived.

Prayer for others has also been part of our lives, praying for those who ask us to pray for them, prayer for the people we serve, for our friends and families, for the sick, for benefactors, for the dead.

So what is it about the requests for prayer through the intercession of Catherine McAuley that catches our attention?

Since Catherine's death in 1841, people have sought her help when bringing their difficulties, pain, anguish and joys to God. More so, since she was declared Venerable in 1990, requests for prayer have increased greatly. Her fame for holiness has spread far and wide. From all over the world people send in requests to us to pray and walk with them through times of illness and loss, in their worries, their anxieties, their hopes and their dreams We are asked to be with parents as they watch at the bed of a very sick child, with the wife who watches her husband and father of her children fight for his life, the sister who asks us to accompany her as she sits night after night with someone dying slowly of cancer, relatives who ask for prayers for healing of family rifts and divisions, friends, neighbours, workmates who plead with us to pray with them for a beloved friend or neighbour or colleague, people who are struggling to remake their lives after a destructive natural disaster and who need our help and support to keep going. The world comes knocking on our door through these varied requests for prayer.

Requests come from all around the world; from places where the Mercy family is known and from places where the Mercy congregation has never been but where the name of Catherine McAuley, for some unknown reason, has reached parishes and community groups, families and individuals.

This ministry of prayer brings us deep into the lives of many people, in many places, in varied situations. Much of the time it is a ministry of "unknowing" – we don't know the people we are praying for, we may never know the outcome of our prayer, whether or not the person we are praying for has been healed, we may not know even what the person looks like nor may we be able to speak their language.

What we do know is that God takes every prayer we offer, all the “fragments” are gathered and God shares the fruits of these prayers in the way that is best for all concerned. As we raise our hands and our hearts in prayer for the person in need, we ourselves are drawn into a hymn of praise and gratitude to God for what God does in the world through our prayer. No matter what our age or energy level, no matter how busy or preoccupied we might be, our ministry of prayer can go on with a simple re-direction of thought, a plea, a smile, a word, a thank you, lightening conductors of God’s Love in the world.

More than ever today our deepening recognition of the interconnectedness of all of life, our deepening awareness and consciousness of life and being, lead us to appreciate that the prayer of intercession has its own particular value. It is an act of trust in God and, at the same time, an expression of love for our neighbour whosoever he or she is. Through our prayer ministry we continue our mercy mission as an expression of our loving concern for others, since it enables us to embrace others’ lives, their deepest troubles and their greatest desires. At the same time we give witness to and rejoice in God’s boundless love for us and for all.

Through our prayer for those who ask us to walk with them, we also join hands with Catherine who draws us with her into a ministry for our time. People believe that she is with God and they turn to us to help them translate that ideal into the ordinary everyday of their lives. And if as Von Balthasar (2004), says, “saints stand at the heart of the world and set before every generation a new interpretation of God’s word” then this is one of the ways forward for Mercy into the future (not the only one by any manner or means) but very definitely one way to be embraced where possible. While other ministries are gradually finding the shape and form that will bring Mercy into the 22nd century this is one ministry we can all participate in, keeping the bridge open and keeping hope alive for a future that may not be our own.

Brenda Dolphin rsm

Postulator for the Cause of Catherine McAuley

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Email: mercypostulator@gmail.com Website: www.mercyworld.org